



THE  
INSCRUTABLE  
LOVERS  
A. MACFARLAN







ols.  
24 August 1969



Orlin Roberts.

*By the same Author*

MOCKERY

PRESENTATION COPY

# The Inscrutable Lovers

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A SAILORS' HOME. *By Richard Deban.*

# THE INSCRUTABLE LOVERS

## A Tragic Comedy

By  
Alexander Macfarlan

AUTHOR OF "MOCKERY."

"I think I could have loved a grocer—just any grocer "  
MARGARET KETTLE.



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LONDON : WILLIAM HEINEMANN

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN. 1919



TO  
MY MOTHER



## PROLOGUE

### I

THE life of a popular preacher is a difficult one, beset with the snares of vanity. It has this advantage: it brings you in touch with types. I have met many uncommon people in the course of my work. Of these I remember in particular the Kettles—Count Kettle and his daughter—whom I saw from time to time when I happened to be preaching in Dublin. I noticed them first in the Pro-Cathedral in Marlborough Street. They were sitting far forward on the left of the nave and either chance or design had isolated them from that packed congregation of worshippers. They had not been long in Dublin. I afterwards found that they were already well known—too well known, perhaps, for their own peace of mind, not well enough known for that of the Irish people. They lived in a different parish, were present every Sunday at the High Mass at

Marlborough Street, invariably arrived at five minutes to twelve.

Count Kettle, a Papal Count, was a middle-aged man, graceful and accomplished. He moved through life as though it were something which must be borne. It was said that he was a great scholar, but there was nothing of the pedant in his behaviour. He had brilliant eyes, dark grey, and a silky beard, unnaturally black, which contrasted with his pallid complexion. His smile was a rare thing, melancholy yet ironical. He was punctiliously courteous, and his self-control was remarkable. I regarded him as one of those self-effacing, natural men, whom the world attacks with every advantage in its favour. The spirit of intellectual Ireland was incarnate in him.

His daughter was graceful, too—a pretty, shy girl, rather tall, with a faintly wrinkled forehead, as though something had perplexed her. She had soft eyes, like dark pansies, which seemed gently to reproach the world for withholding something that was her right. She was unmistakably convent-bred and would have attracted attention in an English drawing-room. That counted for little in Dublin, where, as Queen Victoria is reported to have said, “All the ladies are Queens.”

No. The attraction which she exercised lay rather in the fact that there was something provocative about her. She seemed to appeal for comprehension, to encourage the dullest wits to pierce the enigma of her character, as if that enigma were not by any means insoluble. Her sensitive face, capped with much brown hair, silky like her father's, was distinguished by her nose. It was small but quaintly determined. She must have been about twenty when I first saw her.

They lived in Dublin of necessity, not from choice. Their home was in the south-west, in County Clare, overlooking the rapid Shannon. It was well known that they had played leading parts in that passionate expression of a nation's right to exist—the uprising, tragic and foredoomed, of 1916. Evidence sufficient to justify their arrest was lacking; they were yet regarded by the authorities with suspicion. They had first been ordered to England. Influence had effected a compromise. They were allowed to remain in Ireland, but must live only in the north or east. They had then moved to Dublin, where they had many friends. They were rapidly getting into the black books of the powers that be, by organizing, with the help of these friends, a new society called

"The Society of St. Patrick," concerning the aims of which there could be little doubt. I daresay they were awkward people, but you could not help admiring them.

Their greatest achievement lay probably in the fact that they had remained oblivious to the European War. I call this an achievement, but I don't suppose they had exerted themselves; so the word is not strictly apposite. The fact, however, is extraordinary. The war seemed of no consequence. They felt as remote from European affairs as a pair of aborigines. One of the most amazing things about Ireland is its detachment from its hemisphere. Narrow St. George's Channel is a more effectual barrier than the wide Atlantic. An Irish mother feels closer to her son in America than in England. Italy and Spain are the only European countries that the cultured Irishman cares to visit. Ireland is so remote from England in her sympathies that England comes to be regarded as a very remote land.

Count Kettle's family had for generations been identified with the old Irish aristocracy. It had even more been identified with every national movement that stirred the country into protest. Fantastic schemes, of which the world has never heard, had been conceived



by members of that family, bewilderingly impossible, screamingly funny, poignantly tragic schemes.

A Kettle had been a noted Fenian, and had shared O'Donovan Rossa's fate. Count Kettle, as we know, was implicated in the Republican movement of 1916. Romance was in the family blood. It was not influenced by patriotism alone. In the intervals of strife in Ireland, many of its sons and daughters had ranged the earth, exploring continents, fighting as mercenaries, plotting in South American republics. Such adventures were perhaps their idea of relaxation. They had accomplished some extraordinary things. Not one of them could accomplish a year's work at a conventional occupation.

They were all inveterate dreamers—fanciful, speculative, poetic, restless and unworldly. They preferred at any time the pursuit of an ideal to that of their daily bread, and were indifferent to the hardships into which the pursuit might lead them. There was at least nothing uncertain about them. They were either confessors or heretics. Their men did not as a rule die in their beds. Their women usually died of a broken heart.

Such, then, was the information I gathered

## 6 THE INSCRUTABLE LOVERS

concerning Count Kettle and his daughter. Dublin society gossiped freely. My information, when you think of it, might be gleaned from a history-book or the current *Who's Who*. Count Kettle was indisposed to discuss his life and aims with a casual stranger. Many glimpses of his character he of course afforded in his conversation. Even these were for the most part unconscious.

He was a finished chess-player. I fancy that he was never enthusiastic. He treated the game with the same polite detachment which he brought to bear upon material things in general. It was a tolerable method of passing the time he was forced to waste in the world. I was lucky enough to meet a Jesuit priest with whom he was in the habit of playing. The priest told me that Count Kettle would sit for hours and would say not more than a dozen words beyond those necessary for the game. He had let fall one remark, however, which his opponent treasured and evidently considered profound. He had said simply :

“ Battles nobly lost are the finest victories.”

I suppose it was profound, though I don't think it was specially original. I suppose, too, that it was said with a view to consoling a beaten adversary. I am almost sure of this.

Count Kettle was never sententious. The remark, profound or not, at any rate reveals the reason of much of the composure with which he was able to meet disappointment and contumely. His philosophy is but an adaptation to things in general of the gambler's stipulation: "Heads I win, tails you lose!" Count Kettle, as an opponent at chess, might be very well. But I remember thinking that he would prove difficult at a more serious game.

Dublin is a city where reputations are quickly made. It has this peculiarity: a mythology will be woven about a man before he is dead. In the case of Count Kettle, due allowance must be made for exaggeration, when we examine the anecdotes, many of them ridiculous, which are related of him.

He never sought popularity. He was always in request. His experience and his culture were invaluable to scholars and theologians, to producers of every kind. He was, for example, useful to that circle of literary men identified with the work of the Abbey Theatre. He attained notoriety unintentionally, by one remark. A historical play, dealing with pagan Rome, was to be produced privately. Count Kettle was summoned to advise concerning

points of detail. The promoters gathered enthusiastically after the first rehearsal and, typically, with the Irish love for the abstract, proceeded to discuss the motives and actions of the characters from the ethical point of view. The principal character was a statesman who had betrayed his emperor's trust.

The discussion centred upon ingenious speculations on the courses open to him in meeting the emperor's wrath.

"Obviously he should have taken the initiative," said one. "He should have assumed the mantle of outraged virtue. He should have confuted the emperor with a rain of accusations before the emperor had time to confute him. That's a sound policy. It's always safe to out-Herod Herod."

"Like other valorous figures," said another, "he should have developed an appropriate liking for research. He should have discovered gracefully what was the better part of valour. He should have retired discreetly from Rome."

"Faith!" said a third bitterly, "if he'd been an Irishman, he'd have known that his country's enemies are always ready to canonize a man who's willing to betray his country."

The author of the play, a violent materialist, noticed at this point that Count Kettle was

taking no part in the conversation and asked him "how he would have got out of it." Count Kettle promptly replied with delightful unconsciousness and conviction :

"I should have stayed in Rome and prayed the emperor for a sword."

There was, I believe, a roar of laughter. What could be more entertaining than such mediævalism? The joke was one that Irishmen of that class were peculiarly fitted to appreciate. The humour was rendered rich, when they remembered the man to whom the remark was addressed. Many of them, indeed, must have been convinced that Count Kettle was politely pulling the materialist's leg. I do not think that he was. I believe the man was striving to be sincere. . . . Everybody, for some time, nicknamed him "Don Quixote."

Of his daughter I have so far said little. I hope I have said enough to prevent the idea that she was devoid of character. She was very young. She went seldom into society. She had neither a mother nor an aunt to introduce her. It was rumoured that she was even more idealistic than her father. It was supposed that she spent a great part of her time in pondering the wrongs of her country,



in making schemes for righting them. I know from experience that much of her leisure was devoted to good works. She was a regular visitor, a useful one, to the Superior of a Convent of Little Sisters of the Poor. She had many lovers, all of them young and passionate, all incorrigible dreamers. She encouraged none of them. It was rumoured that she did not want to marry. It was even rumoured that she had vowed herself to chastity in order to indulge her dreams.

I was present at a more or less literary tea given by a would-be intellectual in one of the Sackville Street hotels. The guest of the afternoon was an English journalist who had acquired a reputation by reason of his knowledge of character. I was inclined to like him. He impressed me favourably as a modest fellow, a lion who hesitated to roar. Tea was over. We were all seated in a corner of the lounge, looking upon the busy street. Our hostess caught the journalist's arm and indicated Count Kettle's daughter. She was crossing the street, bent probably upon catching a south-bound tram at the Nelson Pillar.

"Read us that girl's character," said our hostess.



“That pretty girl in brown, who walks so naturally?”

Our hostess nodded.

“Oh, well,” said the journalist slowly, “give her a six-roomed villa in a London suburb, I should say.”

Nobody laughed. The company, excepting the unlucky journalist and myself, were Irish. I think they were shocked. The journalist’s remark savoured of blasphemy! His reputation was for ever blighted in Dublin. And nothing, indeed, seemed more incongruous than Count Kettle’s spirited daughter in a villa.

## II

To a different type belonged Padraig O'Gorman. It was through him that I met the Kettles. He was a solicitor, practising in Dublin and doing well. I had known him long before he was a solicitor. I had worked as curate in a Glasgow parish in my early days. He was one of my parishioners and lived in a district which I visited. I found him an amusing man, so we became friends. He was then plain Patrick O'Gorman, a promising young fellow with a strain of originality. He had been born in Glasgow and had never, as far as I could discover, visited Ireland till he was twenty-two. His father, after a stroke of luck, had then sent him to Dublin to study Irish law. This you would not have guessed. You might justly have thought that he was born and bred in Ireland.

He was thirty-three years old at the time of which I am writing. His red matted hair and beard, coarse and pointed, made him look

older. He was partial to denunciation on any pretext. He had a trick, when he was indulging this partiality, of bitterly curling his upper lip, and of slapping the nearest table with the palm of his hand. The remarkable points about him were his choice of words and his accent. I have presently to represent the latter, and I despair of my task. He was the one Irishman I have met, who spoke as Irishmen are made to speak upon the popular stage. The words *bedad* and *begorra* were his favourite expletives. He was capable of wishing you "more power to your elbow" or of giving you "the top of the morning." It might have been possible to believe in him elsewhere, but in Ireland he was incredible.

A clue to his motives may lie in the fact that no one is more faithfully Irish than the Irishman over the seas. He believed in Sinn Fein. As an Irishman born and bred in Glasgow, to whom a Glasgow accent came naturally, he was bound to have a passion for things Celtic. I indicate, as proof, the haste with which he altered the spelling of his Christian name when he settled in Dublin. I suppose he had made up his mind that no one should have a chance of mistaking his nationality!

I was delivering, in the spring of 1918, a

short course of sermons in a Dublin Church, served by a convent of Carmelite friars. These fathers had hospitably provided me with a room in their convent. This was convenient from the point of view of my work. One of the lay-brothers, Brother Mazzolini, came tapping at my door on my third Sunday evening. He discreetly announced that "Mr. O'Gorman would like to see me." I told him to show him up, but he objected.

"I think he has visitors with him," he murmured. "I've put them in Number Three Parlour."

Brother Mazzolini was a portly friar with brown pleading eyes that harmonized with his habit. He was the son of an Italian stonemason who had married an Irish girl. He lacked dignity though his manner was dignified. He liked to appear discreet about nothing, and this peculiarity was sometimes irritating. He cultivated a wooden expression. He was in fact a naïve soul with a weakness for garrulity that got him into trouble with his superiors. He resembled a type of soldier common in the old regular army of England. I knew it was useless to cross-question such a man, so I rose without protest and descended the stone staircase into the echoing hall.

The door of No. 3 parlour was wide. The pink embers of a neglected fire made the interior bewildering. My friend, O'Gorman, twittering with impatience and excitement, stood in the doorway. I crossed the hall rapidly and shook hands with him. He did not offer to let me pass.

"Well?" I ventured.

I was by that time able to see two dim figures in the parlour. I supposed they were the "visitors."

"Begorra," he said explosively, "but it's praising the saints I am that I've found you in to-night!"

(I have decided not to try to reproduce his pronunciation.)

He went on:

"Two clients of my own have put me in Old Nick's fix. And, on my soul, I don't know how I should be after advising them. So I've brought the pair of them to you. For it's you're the one that can help them, the only one."

So that was the way of it, I gloomily thought. He had dragged me from my pipe, after an exhausting sermon, to give him unpaid counsel's opinion upon the affairs of his miserable clients. They were probably pettifoggers, anxious to



discover if extradition were in force between Scotland and Ireland!

"I don't see how I can be of use—" I was beginning stiffly.

He glanced apprehensively about him and silenced me with the gesture of a conspirator:

"Whisht! Not here. Walls have ears, 'tis said. Wait till we're all inside."

"Then why don't you let me pass inside?"

An expression of cunning stole into his eyes. He lowered his voice to a murmur intended to be placatory.

"Of course, father," he wheedled, "the seal of the confessional is a powerful strong seal? Nothing can melt it, eh? Not even a fire kindled at the Castle?"

Others, warier than he, had tried to trap me in the same way. I permitted myself to be stern.

"Patrick," I told him, "a Catholic of your standing ought to know by this time that no priest in the world will hear a confession in the presence of other people. Nor will he hear three confessions at once. The idea you suggest and the way in which you put it—well—they're both insulting. If you want to



make your confession, go privately to your parish priest. And meanwhile I shall wish you good-night."

I turned away at this. Dancing with vexation, he darted after me and caught my arm.

"Sure, I wasn't wishing to insult you at all," he implored me. I appeared inflexible. "Sure, I know it was all wrong, what I said. So for the love of God come back."

I came back. He looked at me with perplexity for a little. He then began to grin.

"Bedad," he exclaimed, "but it's only the early riser that'll catch you asleep!"

I acknowledged the compliment.

"You see," he went on frankly, "saving your reverence's presence, I'm taking the devil of a risk. And it's only natural I should be after binding you in silence before introducing you to . . . to my clients."

"If you think," I put in, "if you really think I can be of use, I shall be pleased. But there must be no question of 'seals of the confessional' or anything of the sort. I am willing, of course, to hear your clients in confidence, which I certainly won't break unless I see that I must. Will that do? If so, I am willing——"

He interrupted with an impulsive "Bedad, and I'll trust your reverence," dragged me through the door, shut it cautiously behind us. One of the figures had slowly advanced to meet us. O'Gorman now turned with an elaborate show of deference. He indicated him with a wave of the hand.

"Count Kettle," he said.

This put a different complexion on the face of affairs. I nearly whistled, in my surprise. Two pettifoggers, indeed! Brother Mazzolini's discretion was justified at any rate for once. I saw, as through a mist, Count Kettle acknowledge the introduction with a bow. I heard, as from afar, his voice assuring me that "it was awfully good of me to permit myself to be disturbed like this." My brain then cleared. I allowed myself one last wrathful glance at O'Gorman who had grown meek.

"I'm sorry there should have been this absurd misapprehension," I said, turning to Count Kettle.

He smiled reassuringly. I noticed in the dusk of that parlour how vividly his white teeth contrasted with his black beard.

"No misapprehension at all."

He turned to the other, the fourth figure in the room.

“ This is my daughter Margaret.”

I acknowledged the introduction and switched on the electric light. The limitations of the parlour were then made evident. It was a little room, rectangular and shabby. There was a patternless oilcloth upon the floor, and a varnished kneeling-desk behind the door with a metal crucifix nailed to the wall above it. A solitary picture of St. Teresa occupied another of the walls. The sole articles of furniture were a narrow table, draped with a crimson cloth, and three wooden chairs. On the table rested a safety ink-bottle partly filled, a wooden pen with a long corroded nib, a dilapidated blotter. The grate was of iron. The mantel-shelf bore no ornaments. A torn roller blind screened the window.

I asked my guests to sit down, and Count Kettle and his daughter at once did so. There were only three chairs. I found myself involved in an argument with O’Gorman, who refused to take the third, preferring to lean against the door in an awkward attitude. I myself took the third chair—the quickest way of ending a useless argument. I sat at one side of the table, Count Kettle faced me. Miss Kettle was on my right, at the end of the table, with her back to the fireplace

O'Gorman, like a gloomy little brigand shepherding unwilling conspirators, studied us from the door. I drew a breath of expectation and waited for Count Kettle to begin.

He bent forward, clasping his hands upon the table.

"The English," he said, "have a proverb about the folly of carrying coal to Newcastle. They regard the matter purely from the commercial standpoint—which is their way. But the man who carries coal to Newcastle may be guilty of bad taste. It's an unpardonable breach of good manners."

I nodded doubtfully. I did not yet know whither this conversation was tending. He went on earnestly, before I had time to interrupt.

"And so, father, you must forgive me talking theology to a theologian. I shall speak as briefly as I can. I can faithfully promise you that."

I told him that he might say what he chose. He continued easily, after thanking me for my permission—my "clemency," as he insisted on calling it.

"The Church condemns all secret societies, and I place my hopes of salvation unreservedly

in the hands of the Church. So I should not wilfully act contrary to her teaching."

He paused expectantly.

"You mean—?" I said, still mystified.

He drew himself up. His action was the first hint of excitement he had given. He said passionately:

"The Society of St. Patrick is no secret society."

His statement may or may not have been true. I said guardedly that "the Society's aims were at least fairly well known," which was a fact. He went on, scarcely heeding me:

"My daughter and I are pledged irrevocably to that Society. Indeed we brought it into being. We make no secret either of the function we intend it to perform." He unclasped his hands and leant back in his chair. "Yet, because of this, our property is held in Glasgow. Having justified our position, we ask for your sympathy, father."

O'Gorman, still at the door, could contain himself no longer. I had once or twice noticed him from the corner of my eye. His excitement had been returning. He had latterly been fidgeting. He was itching to denounce anything or anybody. He burst into a torrent



of explanations. His grammar was at fault owing to the stress of his feelings.

"Sympathy! Begorra, and I'd like to know who wouldn't sympathize with such shocking high-handed awful tyranny! . . . But it's more than sympathy we're after. . . . They come into my office yesterday, asking me for to advise them how to get hold of their lawful property that the spalpeens across the water are wanting to steal. And me laying all night puzzling me head for a plan! 'Tis only this very day I thought of bringing them to your reverence."

He stopped as he had begun. Some one might have jerked a hidden string. He wasn't illuminating. But the time his speech occupied had given me a chance to think. I began to see daylight, to have a notion of the kind of property that was being detained in Glasgow. I boldly declared my notion.

"I'm afraid," I said to Count Kettle, "that I can't help you to bring weapons of war into Ireland."

I half expected that his reserve would be shattered by this. I ought to have known better. Count Kettle was a diplomat. He did not turn a hair. He smiled rather sadly and seemed, as he looked beyond

me, to be considering the matter of my decision.

“ Weapons of war ! ” he said slowly. “ The present generation speaks as if they came from Satan. But surely there is something, then Pharisaic about the present generation ? For its deeds belie its words. It speaks like a pacifist, and it uses the instruments it condemns. Why this flurried indignation at the idea of weapons of war ? ” He looked me in the eyes : “ I get these weapons in secret, you know. Yet I would give much for the privilege of getting them openly. For my country is committed to a duel . . . I have always regretted that the Church condemned duelling.”

He smiled once more. His brilliant eyes seemed to become more brilliant.

“ Weapons of war ! ” he repeated. “ Cold, precise instruments of sudden death and destruction ! Tools for murderers and robbers ! And we, who are Irish, want them. So at once the English regard us as a nation of malefactors, for they consider only our desires. Will they never consider the need, of which those desires are born ? ”

“ I am not English,” I interrupted.

“ I know,” he answered quickly. “ Do you



think I would speak like this to an Englishman?"

"I am Scottish," I went on, "and I too have thought my thoughts in my day. But it is hopeless, for justice is seldom satisfied. Riveted chains are usually unbreakable. And dreams end in—further dreams."

Margaret Kettle spoke for the first time throughout that interview. Her arms were resting loosely upon the table. Her fingers clasped and unclasped. That she was not inattentive I knew, for her eyes had been moving from one speaker to another. I thought that her eagerness was pathetic. There was, too, a suggestion of fear in her behaviour.

Her voice was persuasive. A trace of huskiness only softened it.

"Scotland," she said, "has bought satisfaction at the price of all her illusions."

It was so true that I held my breath. I looked with a new respect at this pretty, diffident girl, who had summarized in a phrase the many convictions that I had buried in my heart for years. I wanted to shake her hand, to congratulate her, as though upon some great achievement. I had time to say nothing. Count Kettle plunged into an explanation.

"Let me inflict on you a few facts for a

moment," he said. I was roused from my reverie.

"And let us not speak of 'Weapons of War,'" he went on. "Let us deal with my property in a more abstract fashion. Employ a euphemism, if you will. Let us speak of my property as 'the goods.' The latter name, I think, is a happy one, for I understand it is a favourite American expression. And the goods in question are coming straight from America—South America, at least. I'd better not name the country. My agent there has secured them with trouble. It has cost him even more to arrange for their exit from that profoundly amazing country. They are consigned to Glasgow instead of Liverpool, for various excellent reasons. The difficulties have apparently been increasing, for the hardest fight of all has been to arrange for their landing in Glasgow. Yet that difficulty has been surmounted. I had arranged, too, that the goods should be shipped immediately from Glasgow to Dublin by the Macaig Line of steamers. And now, at the very last, they have refused to bring them across. I cannot approach another line. And the Macaigs insist upon an inquiry into the exact nature of my goods. It appears that old Mr. Macaig, the

senior partner of the firm, has developed violent prejudices in favour of the Ulster party, after a lifetime of complete and cynical indifference to ideals of every sort. The junior partner, his son, is at present at the Dublin office."

"But how," I asked, "can I be of any use?"

"You might see this junior partner, if you would be so very generous."

"But I have nothing in common with him!"

"Your nationality, father."

"I should be more hindrance than help."

"On the contrary. Our mutual friend, Mr. O'Gorman, considers you our last hope."

Well, the time had come for the nicest discretion. Heaven knows from what standpoint of romanticism Count Kettle justified his request. I was still convinced that interference would precipitate the disaster. The idea was preposterous, too. I had to consider my priesthood. A stranger to walk into the Macaig's office and try to contravene the Defence of the Realm Act! Oh, no. The notion was ridiculous. But how was I to convey this delicately to Count Kettle? I was in a predicament. I perhaps showed my dismay.

“ You must look on us as barbarians,” said Count Kettle. “ To incommode a stranger with our affairs.”

I did not know how I looked on them. I think I was aggrieved. I could only smile feebly.

“ But why me ? ” I muttered. “ Why don’t you see him for yourself ? ”

Count Kettle was ready for this question. He bent persuasively towards me. His eyes sparkled. His lips were eagerly parted. He radiated vitality. He became a hero. I was temporarily conquered, for his manners were charming.

“ This young man, this junior partner,” he began, “ this Macaig is the essence of all that is commonplace. He has the commercial outlook. He is a practical business man. He is twenty-nine years old, and from his infancy he has been nourished upon facts alone. His life is made up of facts. And he hates the things that I love.”

His words had been chosen to convince me. They relieved me.

“ Then don’t you see,” I exclaimed, “ don’t you see that you’re the man to go to him, if his character is what you say ? ”

This was a flash of inspiration, one of these

intuitions where the result triumphs superbly. I had no doubts, either, about that result. I hastened to make my point :

“ You suggest he is painfully commonplace ? ”

“ He is all that.”

“ Then don't you see he is probably irritated by the mystery and—er—romance, with which you are surrounding the business ? I shall respect your confidence, of course, but it seems to me that your methods are wrong. And, in any case, if I went to him, it would only deepen the mystery, and incidentally irritate him further.” I paused. “ But if you went to see him,” I continued ; “ if you drop pretence—a safe thing to do, since he guesses at the truth already—if you drop pretence and tell him the truth ! Plain truth for a plain man, don't you see, and no glamour ! Why, it's ten chances to one that he'll have inherited his father's indifference, and there will no longer be a mystery to irritate him. You'll have removed that. So it's ten chances to one that he will be actuated by indifference. He'll ship you the goods and regard the affair as a mere matter of commerce.”

I stopped. Count Kettle pushed back his chair. He rose and bowed.



“As usual,” he observed, “the Church solves the problem.”

I could hardly realize my escape from a business in which I had no wish to be involved.

“You believe?” I managed to say.

“I believe that you are right, though your point of view is a novel one. At least you show us our chance, since you cannot see your way to help us. I shall myself go to him to-morrow.”

His daughter rose too. I noticed she was trembling.

“But the risk, father,” she entreated him in her soft voice. “Will you never think about the risk? It may happen as you say. But sometimes there have been mistakes. He may not regard it as commerce. Yes. His hate may be stronger than his indifference! He may report you to the Castle. You may be—arrested, father.”

She looked at him with great affection. Her lips were parted. Her bosom rose and fell. She then pressed her hands to her face. This she did so simply that the situation was not awkward. I was thinking that her sorrow was every woman's portion. Christ had brought such sorrow to His mother. . . . Count Kettle

studied his daughter. I thought he was disturbed. He spoke lightly, however.

"And what of it, *ma fille*?" A shocking change came over him. "Ah! You mean that I cannot be spared from Ireland? Yes. That is true." He paused. "I cannot take the risk," he cried. "I am in Ireland only by a miracle. I must sacrifice this post of honour. I must yield it to some one else."

Tears were in his voice. I have had experience of the tears that men weep. The situation had at last become painful. I dreaded most what usually happened next. That man was amazing. He controlled himself with no apparent effort. He forced himself to speak indifferently, too. His was a triumph over the emotions.

"You shall go," he told his daughter.

She dropped her hands and looked at him helplessly.

"For a man must give of his best," he went on. "And I willingly give of mine."

I ventured to put in that "there really was a certain risk," but he merely smiled:

"Yes. The risk of suffering for her convictions. That is why true Irishmen will envy my daughter in her task."



### III

My interesting visitors left me. I left Dublin a few days later. I did not expect to be back for months. I thought little about what I had been told. I turned my thoughts from it as vigorously as if O'Gorman had confided in me under the "seal of the confessional." The world is romantically uncertain. Plans are made, only to be broken, it would seem. I found myself in Dublin within six weeks.

Mine was a week-end visit, beginning on the Saturday and resolutely ending on the Monday. I had received three offers of hospitality. I preferred, as my time was limited, to stay in Sackville Street at Nolan's Hotel. This hotel, small, neat, of Byzantine architecture, was much in favour with the clergy. I meant to return by Larne and Stranraer, and therefore arranged to leave for Belfast by the three o'clock express from Amiens Street. My business ended with the Sunday, so Monday morning I passed in

Phoenix Park. I got back to the city sooner than I expected. For want of occupation I lunched early at a D.B.C. shop. People of affairs interest me. I finished lunch at one o'clock, when other people were beginning. I was still left with an awkward gap to bridge. My car was not due until two-thirty. I might easily have returned to my hotel and rested in my room, but I was unsettled. I said, on the spur of the moment, that I would look up O'Gorman.

I had scarcely started for his office, which was off Grafton Street, when reason told me that he would probably be out for lunch. I considered, nevertheless, that I had gone too far to turn. It was with misgivings that I stamped laboriously up the wooden staircase, narrow and dusty, which led to the rooms he occupied. I entered his office by a flimsy door, panelled with opaque glass. My misgivings were increased by the spectacle of a boy, small and knickerbockered, who was in sole charge.

"Is Mr. O'Gorman in?"

"He is."

I heaved a sigh of relief. The boy disappeared with my card into O'Gorman's room.

I found out later that that boy and a clerk of twenty-four, who was then at lunch, made up the staff. The office was small. It contained two rooms. The door by which I had entered began a passage between a distempered wall and a massive counter, varnished, ink-splashed, shiny with the uneasy elbows of O'Gorman's clients. This passage ended in a second door, which led to O'Gorman's room. Beyond the counter was a square little space, with a bare iron grate in the wall parallel to the counter, and an imposing chandelier out of keeping with the otherwise uniform shabbiness. At each side of the grate, at right-angles to it, there was a hacked desk, with tall wooden stools so arranged that the occupant of the one would have his back to the occupant of the other. At each end of the counter there was a gap, so that the staff might have a quick and easy passage to the doors.

I had not long to wait. The boy reappeared to ask me "Would I step this way?" I went in. He closed the door behind me. I found myself in a room similar to the one I had left. Things, however, were not as forlorn. This room was as the other in plan and size but a few efforts at decoration had been made. There were a threadbare jute carpet, a couple

of cheap engravings, a book-case of imitation oak faced with glass, an old, but originally expensive, roll-topped desk which opened towards the grate.

O'Gorman was seated at this desk. He was writing furiously and did not look up for perhaps forty-five seconds. I had time to observe him. I now saw him in his element. He cut before my eyes a figure less ridiculous than usual. His matted hair and bristling beard invested him with a certain grim dignity. I had been hitherto inclined to mistrust him for his streak of peasant's cunning. I was now able to admire him for the self-made man that he was. You see a man at his best when he is busy with the work for which his Creator meant him.

"How is business?" I asked, when he had greeted me and insisted on giving me his chair.

"'Deed, and it's not so bad at all, father, thanking you kindly for asking. But it's nothing but business I get in the office here, so I'm after wanting a change. You'll be fresh from across the water? I'll be grateful for any news."

My first impression was confirmed. He was chastened. His manners were better. I began

to think there was even a touch of pathos about him. I didn't say so, of course. I followed his lead and gave him information about Glasgow. I had spent a night in his old parish on my way to Ireland. There ensued, when I had exhausted my information, one of those trifling pauses that happen at times.

I thought he was becoming uneasy. I wanted to put him at his ease. I said at random :

“ And haven't you any news for me since I saw you last, at the Carmelites' ? ”

He was silent.

“ Anything at all,” I encouraged him. “ Anything at all will be genuine news to me, for I've only been in Dublin since Saturday. I have heard Count Kettle is giving a lecture this week ? ”

His expression grew forbidding. He picked up a sheet of grey blotting-paper and gloomily held it before him.

“ And is that all you've heard of him ? ” he muttered peevishly.

I was annoyed at his perversity.

“ Is there anything more to hear ? ” I asked, with severity.

He shook his head.



"Nothing. Nothing. Nothing at all, save gossip. And you wouldn't have me repeating the talk I've heard? Talking about my neighbour's business? Talking scandal, it would be."

I told him, "Certainly not." I spoke coldly. I was disappointed by his sudden relapse into his servile manner. I could well understand that a man like Count Kettle must make talk for many tongues. I could imagine, moreover, the stories they invented. My curiosity was not excited. To give him a hint of my feelings—as much as to change the subject—I said :

"I suppose Miss Kettle is working as hard as ever?"

He looked at me very sombrely.

"She is no longer in Dublin."

"Not arrested?" I cried.

The thought of that romantic girl languishing in a Castle cell was repugnant to me. He jumped up and strode scornfully to the window. I may seem, of course, to have deserved this treatment. My question was yet reasonable, for I remembered the task she had undertaken.

Half turning his head he favoured me with an indignant stare. He then remarked with ferocious bitterness :

"No. And I wish to God that she had been."

I showed my astonishment naïvely.

"You don't like her, then?"

"I—do—not—like—her," he replied, with slow, exasperated emphasis.

I was shocked. Yes. But I was more relieved than shocked. I was used, by this time, to the atmosphere of mystery which surrounded the Kettles. Here, I thought, was the usual mystery. I made up my mind that some plot or counterplot had carried her away from Dublin. I accounted for O'Gorman's manner by supposing that he was aggrieved by her scheme. I had wasted his time sufficiently. I had passed my own successfully. I did not pursue the subject, and bade him an abrupt good-bye.

Grafton Street I found congested with a crowd of men and women who had finished lunch. They were hurrying back to their employments. Most of them were dressed sombrely. I found myself deploring that stain of puritanism, seemingly indelible, which spoils the Irish character. Officers, khaki-clad and immaculate, seldom alone, but in groups of two or three, forced a way through the crowd. They were talking gaily and seemed unconscious



of their unpopularity. The sloping street, darkened by tall buildings, was reminiscent of a teeming lane near St. Paul's Churchyard.

I went in the direction of my hotel. I walked slowly, for I had time to spare. It was a day of brilliant sunshine, but a wind was blowing, brisk and keen. Fleecy clouds were rolling across the sky. I clapped my hand to my hat as I crossed the Liffey, and, in so doing, jostled a man who was walking in the opposite direction. I turned to apologize and found myself facing Count Kettle.

He, too, had been moving slowly, with his hands joined loosely at his back. He must have been thinking. His head was bent. His eyes were fixed on the ground. He looked at me blankly and resentfully, as a polite philosopher, just convinced that matter did not exist, might look at a friend who had boisterously slapped him on the shoulder. He then remembered me, and gently disclaimed my apology.

"Are you here for a time?" he asked.

"I'm leaving this afternoon."

"I must thank you again," he went on, "for the kindness you did me last month. I thanked you most shockingly then. I was rudely absorbed with affairs. I'm afraid

you're comparing my character to—to this bridge."

"Well. That's stable enough."

"Is anything stable? I doubt it, you know."

This took me aback. I felt uncomfortably that such a remark could be described only as eccentric. The man had made it so naturally and disarmingly that I dismissed my suspicion. There was nothing eccentric in his manner. He must have been making a joke.

I left the subject at this.

"Well, I mustn't keep you," I said.

"But you're not keeping me," he assured me. "I have only my club to go to. I should like immensely to walk with you, if I'm not encroaching upon your time."

"I am only bound for my hotel, to wait till my car is due."

"Then I'll walk with you there, if I may."

I replied that I should be glad if he cared to sit with me in my room for the short time I could spare him. He accepted my invitation. We set off. There was something puzzling in his suggestion, in his almost pathetic wish for the company of a stranger. What were the thoughts he so manifestly

wished to escape? I could not answer that question.

"You've heard about my daughter?" he said.

I told him briefly that I had. He was perhaps anxious for her safety. I could in that case understand his manner. I waited with interest to see if he would continue the subject. His next remark was irrelevant.

"I hear," he said thoughtfully, "that Conscription is coming in Ireland. Do you think that is so?"

"It's the first that I've heard of it," I replied. "And I don't for an instant believe it. I am certain that the nation, both clergy and people, would oppose it with all their might on the ground that compulsion is only justified when those compelled are in the minority."

He smiled in his melancholy way.

"And minorities are usually in the right."

This led to an interesting discussion. I wondered if minorities were in the right. I told him so. We agreed, as we went along Sackville Street, that they were. We then glanced indignantly at some one who was flouting the opinions of the majority by keeping to the left! We were serious. A man's most superb inconsistencies are perceived only by

his neighbour. Is there any theorist, I wonder, who has not suffered through others applying his theories?

My sitting-room was on the second floor. I felt it was a pity that Count Kettle should have such a journey for nothing. I could spare him little more than fifteen minutes. It was by this time a quarter past two, and I wanted to leave punctually. I took him up, however. I offered him whiskey, which he refused, and a good cigarette, which he accepted but lit with the absent-mindedness of a man who is lighting a straw. He crushed it presently and flung it into the grate before an ash was formed. I was faced with another anomaly. He was usually punctilious.

My room was insufficiently furnished. It erred as do most hotel sitting-rooms. It contained a round table, a couple of upright chairs whose nap survived in tufts, a long plush curtain which could be drawn, a remarkable assortment of ash-trays. It yet had its advantages. The walls were a plain green; the chairs and curtains matched the walls. There was a deep arm-chair by the fireplace, a chair which I had regarded with mistrust until I tried it. It was comfortable, as its springs had been removed.

I settled my guest in this chair and sat down beside the table. We talked politics for a little, but politics in the abstract. He must, I think, have reminded himself that I was his host. He tried to be interesting and for a time succeeded. I was certain that he was distraught, however. And he soon grew taciturn again.

I became uneasy. I was sure that my car was due. It was important that I should cross that night. I explained what was wrong and went to the window, which luckily faced the street. The queer perpendicular dolls were passing and repassing on the pavement below. There was no car to be seen. A clock chimed in the distance. I knew it was half-past two.

I had engaged the expected car to please Nicky, the boy who attended to my rooms. It appeared that he had an ambiguous relative, an aunt's cousin, I think, who owned and drove a car with the smartest pony in town. He had pleaded the cause of this relative with a fervour that I could not withstand. He had sworn that the car would appear at the hour I should name. I wondered apprehensively if the car existed.

I could no longer afford to believe in it. I left the window in vexation and pushed the



bell. Nicky answered it so promptly that I suspected he must have been waiting, with a view to placating me. He was a tall, serious youth, with expressionless grey eyes and a jaw inclined to drop.

“Has my car come?”

“It has not, father.”

“Well, go immediately and fetch a cab from the Pillar.”

“But the car should be here——”

“But it isn’t.”

“He’s sure to be starting——”

“So is my train,” I said dryly.

He withdrew reluctantly. I turned to my guest who, with head averted, was gazing into the empty fireplace. I asked him if he knew where young Macaig was staying. I thought it would be an amusing coincidence if he were in my hotel. I also wanted something to say. The minutes preceding a departure are always difficult. Things dwindle into insignificance. This, I suppose, is due to egotism. We are apt to despise what we are leaving.

Count Kettle smiled thoughtfully.

“I have his address at home,” he admitted. He paused. “But I imagine you may find it in a Glasgow Directory.”

“So he’s left Dublin?”

"He has."

"And gone back to Glasgow for good?"

"For good? Well, I wonder."

I was again taken aback by his manner. He went on without looking at me:

"He left after his engagement."

Young Macaig's marriage! I remembered Count Kettle describing him as "a practical business man, from his infancy nourished on facts." I speculated on the motives that must have prompted such a man towards matrimony. I tried, too, to picture the wife he must have chosen—a worldly young woman, no doubt, very sensible, with obvious physical charms. The picture I formed was effaced when I remembered that women of that sort were mercifully the exception in Ireland. I still felt that his bride had been chosen in Ireland.

"Oho!" I said aloud. "So he's marrying an Irish girl! But that will be unpleasant for his father."

"And for hers."

"And when does the marriage take place?"

"It has taken place."

"Who was it?"

His expression was startled.



"My daughter. But I thought that you said you had heard?"

He thought that I had heard! I don't suppose that, even so, I should have believed it. I was reeling from the shock. I perceived that O'Gorman must have known, that this accounted for his exasperated comments whenever I mentioned her name. Many of Count Kettle's remarks, formerly dismissed, now became invested with an importance that was sinister. Life is a riddle. Death is its solution. Death will perhaps teach us that every remark is important.

"I thought—that is, I heard only she had left Dublin. But this—" Another development struck me: "Then your plans? Have they all been knocked on the head?"

"Yes. They've all been knocked on the head," he agreed uncritically. His tongue was loosened.

"I don't need to remind you that I wanted to deal with him myself. She was afraid I should be arrested. I suppose there was a remote possibility of that. You know, I do most sincerely believe that my arrest would be a calamity for Ireland. Her utter pre-occupation with ideals was quite natural in my daughter." He threw back his head.

He gave me a view of his muscular throat. It gleamed through the roots of a beard which might have been dyed in Chinese ink. "Yes. It was quite natural, I am certain. Surely I should know my daughter?" He clasped his hands behind his head. He looked down upon me askance from beneath his eyelids. "So she took my place," he went on reflectively. "I let her go to him. And I have never seen her since then. She telegraphed to say she would be unable to return that night. I thought at first, of course, that she had been arrested, and while I was forcing myself to bear that thought with fortitude, a letter came from her. A letter telling me she was about to marry this—this Macaig, and had sailed with him to Glasgow, as, I presume, dispensation was impossible here. Just like that, you know: Quite short. Pitilessly short." He transferred his scrutiny to the smoky ceiling. "And then another telegram from Scotland to say they had been married that morning. Well, that is all I can tell you, for I don't know any more myself. I am trying to think of her as 'Mrs. Maciag,' but I assure you that I find it difficult. To reconcile our children's deeds with our conception of them! That is always difficult. For we think

of our children as a part of ourselves. We shall always, I believe, be disappointed. We must remember that they are individuals—mysteries, therefore.”

He seemed to have forgotten his daughter. I was just beginning to feel repelled by this indifference. I noticed a look of distress in his eyes. He then unclasped his hands, lowered them, gripped the lapels of his coat. He stood up uncertainly. He walked quickly to the window and back, as if he wanted to escape.

“How could she?” he said in agony. “To marry a man like that!”

I then heard the rumble of wheels. I muttered a quick good-bye and hurried from the room. My conduct was no doubt shameful, but I was forced to consider my train. The world often limits the emotions. I went to my bedroom, picked up my case, dropped down the stairs, three at a time. I found two vehicles, a cab and a car, waiting at the kerb.

The cab was foremost. Its driver was a Samson with enormous hands and a stolid face, big and fiery. The driver of the car was extraordinary. He was a miserable little man, thin and neurotic, with arms and legs like

pipe-stems, with a walrus moustache. He was wearing a bowler hat. He resembled some fantastic marionette. I despair of conveying the atmosphere of depression which he radiated.

He was squeaking dreadful vituperation upon the cabman's head. Nicky was standing beside him. I concluded that here was the ambiguous relative who had failed to turn up in time. He was waving his arms in a series of futile gestures. I gathered that he was complaining. He said that he was cheated of his job. His adversary swore at him occasionally in a hoarse whisper.

I gave the little man a shilling, jumped into the cab, and was driven off to the music of his protests. We reached Amiens Street uneventfully. I just succeeded in catching the Belfast train. This, then, was my last impression of Dublin—the impression of an incident, the peculiar humour of which could have blossomed nowhere but in Ireland. I was glad, in a way, to have received it. It elusively epitomized the tragedy of Ireland.

I reflected on the Kettle sensation as the train bore me northward, by the rugged shore, through the green valleys, along the Boyne, where an earlier act of that tragedy had been played. Count Kettle had said of his

daughter: "How could she? To marry a man like that!" There are two sides to a question. I fell to wondering how young Macaig, "from his infancy nourished upon facts," how young Macaig could ever have married Margaret Kettle. It was astounding, I thought. It was incredible. It seemed a perfect example of irrationality.





## PART I

### I

It is a shame that environment, and not vocation, should determine the future of a child. There are wonderful exceptions to this, which we sometimes encounter with delight. It is not suggested that the rule is arbitrary, that doctors' sons inevitably become doctors, book-keepers' sons book-keepers, carpenters' sons carpenters. It is suggested that the son of a professional man is destined—almost predestined—by his parents to a profession, that, in nine cases out of ten, the son of a business-man will pass his life at commerce, that the son of a workman must succeed against heavy odds if he desires to escape the workshop. Girls are in the same position. They may find emancipation in a lucky marriage.

Margaret Veronica Kettle was educated by the Sisters of Notre Dame at Milltown Park, a southern suburb of Dublin. She boarded, during term, with the Sisters. She spent

her holidays with her parents, in the village of Killaloe.

Killaloe stands on the banks of the Shannon where the river once more narrows after flowing through Lough Derg. It is fourteen miles from Limerick and four miles from the main line between Limerick and Ballybrophy. With this line it is connected by a light engine and a single carriage from Birdhill, a name which impressed Margaret as apposite—chiefly, as she afterwards concluded, because at Birdhill station there was a wall-eyed porter with a ragged moustache, who resembled a depraved but optimistic sparrow. From Birdhill the train rattles across the forlorn green bog, which stretches from Dublin to Limerick, till a sudden bend in the line reveals fern-clad mountains and the broad impatient Shannon, a long low bridge (with many arches) of grey and mouldering stone, a cluster of whitewashed houses with a blue mist of peat-smoke hovering above their chimneys. The station occurs when it is least expected. You alight upon a wooden platform into a keen moist atmosphere impregnated with the smell of peat.

The bulk of the village struggles up a hill at the other side of the river. It is sealed, as it were, by a church at both ends—at the

lower end by the former Cathedral, which the Protestants have taken and put to their own uses, and, at the upper end, by a modern Catholic Church which dominates the countryside. Near the station, on the right-hand side of the chalky road which runs eastward from the bridge, there is a small house, low and straggling and separated from the road by an irregular line of trees, with (beyond them) a gentle slope of rough garden. This house belongs to Count Kettle. It was built by his father as an improvement on a small fifteenth-century castle, of which one stunted fragment still remains, a symbol, perhaps, of the family to which it belongs, an anachronism. Margaret spent her holidays in this house.

It contains eight rooms, a kitchen with some offices, and a bathroom. The water is merely pumped from the river by a ram. It is not considered fit to drink. Drinking water is brought daily, as though it were milk, in a great hogshead, balanced between two high wheels, and drawn by a small rough-coated donkey. The house, when Margaret knew it, was staffed by two servants—a maid named Mary Conolly, plump, peevish, middle-aged, hypochondriac, and a man named Michael Duffy, grey-moustached, shaky at the knees,

but pathetically eager and with a wonderfully tender smile. Count Kettle could have had more servants. His income was fifteen hundred pounds (which is wealth in Ireland); and he had no children except Margaret. He certainly had a town-house in Dublin, but the upkeep of this was trifling as he did not keep it up. He spent yearly a large sum on books embodying his ideals and on costly plans which he hoped would further them. The secret of the leakage is explained.

Margaret saw less of him than might be expected. He breakfasted alone in his study on a biscuit and a cup of black coffee. He never appeared until lunch at one o'clock. She thus regarded him during her childhood rather with respect and admiration than with love—rather with reverence, as a kind being, ascetic and omniscient, splendidly aloof from the commonplace. After lunch, however, she could always depend on him for two hours. If the day were fine, he would walk with her on the springy turf, by the edge of the sluggish lough. If it were raining, he would take her to his study, a small narrow room, lined with books and painted and carpeted in brown. He would settle her in his capacious chair, upholstered with soft warm leather. He would

talk with her gently, as though she were his mental equal. He would tell her tales of romance and discourse upon the merit of high adventure for its own sake. He would urge her to remain indifferent to the world, to create a world of her own, to live only for ideals, and (if necessary) to die for them. She would kneel, later in the day, when evening prayers were finished. He would bless her and whisper a final instruction born of his impossible philosophy. She would then curtsy, as she had been taught, and withdraw dreamily to bed.

Her mother never played an important part in her life. She was indeed no more in her mother's company than in her father's. She loved her father's better. Her mother, having no gift of sympathy, seemed to keep her at a distance. Her mother was a self-contained lady, whose lined face, tightened lips, and haggard eyes were stamped with a faded beauty which might have been that of a Spaniard. She was something, moreover, of an invalid and breakfasted in her bed. Every morning at eight, Margaret was accustomed to attend the small chapel which stood by the station entrance. Mass was said by a curate from the parish church when the Kettles were in residence or



tourists in the village many. On her return, she would tap at her mother's door. If she received an answer, she would mutely enter the shaded room faintly perfumed with sandalwood. She would curtsy to the great four-poster, carefully approach its head, murmur a timid good-morning, bend towards the pale face framed in a tumble of black hair, and diffidently kiss its cheek. She would receive a kiss upon her forehead, a tired word of encouragement. She would then leave with the same precautions against noise which had marked her entry. She would afterwards see her mother—certainly not until lunch, possibly not until tea. There were days, indeed, when her mother was unable to appear.

Neighbours were scarce. They regarded life from a standpoint similiar to Count Kettle's. Their sympathies were of course narrower in many cases. They were idealists only where their own country was concerned. They did not share with him that belief in the universal application of theories which distinguished his philosophy. They were all certain to teach Margaret the romantic outlook on affairs. They drove home, in consequence, her father's precept that she should live for ideals and, if necessary, die for them. They were all



pledged to the Nationalist movement. Such movements are coloured with romance during their early stages, however prosaic they may become when their end is near.

She was a serious little girl.

“What will you do when you’re grown up?” some one once asked her.

“I’ll live and die for ideals,” she replied softly.

But her reply was too smooth. It should have roused suspicions. It was the obvious reply of a child who had been told that this was the correct sentiment. . . .

The convent at Milltown Park stood away from, and above, the main road. It was thence separated by a high stone wall and a slope of perfect lawn which rose gradually till it consummated in a velvet terrace. The body of the building had put out two annexes. These stretched nearly to the road and partially enclosed the lawn. The latter might have been a vast stage with the boundary-wall for a curtain, the body of the building for a back-cloth, the annexes for wings. The body contained the Sisters’ rooms, kitchen, refectory, the pupils’ dormitories, lavatories, dining-hall, a few class rooms. The right annex contained the rest of the class-rooms and a couple of

new laboratories. The upper story of the left annex was devoted to a large Gothic chapel. Below this were the pantries, store-rooms, and servants' bedrooms. A great hall, which served for examinations and concerts, had been put up behind the convent.

It was in the convent that most of Margaret's girlhood was spent. She was on the whole happy. She did not enjoy learning, but she was taught with patience and affection and thus spared many of those humiliations which accompany the process of knowledge. Her scholarship was perhaps less thorough than it might have been. That was inevitable. Her teachers and herself both knew that it was to be put to no use. It was accomplishment rather than information that her father wished her to acquire. She was sent to school to be fitted for her position in life, the position, that is, which her parents thought she would occupy. She was fitted for it. She gained at least a grip of those dogmas which God Himself came down from Heaven to establish.

It is a pity that English prejudice does not favour convent schools. It is clear that good women who devote their lives to God and do their work from no pecuniary motive are likely to be more zealous than many who

teach for a livelihood. Impurity may be found everywhere, even at times in the chair of St. Peter. There is probably less of it among the girls of a convent than among those of a secular school. Any boarding-school, whatever its advantages, has this in its favour: it is a partial change of environment. It offers to a child a chance of evading destiny.

Margaret, however, could not escape her environment. Her father's principles were so well known that romance clung to her, like an evil reputation. She found her companions ready to admire her, with shining eyes, as the heroine of romance. Nothing she said or did could alter their conviction. Nuns are usually practical, but it was natural that they should acknowledge the rights to which she was entitled by reason of her supposed beliefs. Precise Sister Mary Aloysius taught history. She would condemn some extravagant escapade but would throw Margaret a smile, as if to show that she meant nothing personal. She was ready to make a concession to the fanciful ideas of Count Kettle's daughter!

Count Kettle's daughter was tired of romance. It so haunted her that she sighed for a sphere where sensible things received the attention which was their due. Adventure

attracted her not at all. Startling though this may seem, reflection will show that it is logical. The sweetest melody is apt to pall, if heard again and again. Sailors, gypsies, actors, minstrels, adventurers! These professions are considered romantic, and it is true that they have sometimes been chosen from romantic motives. It is also true that most men and women who practise them are notoriously indifferent to glamour.

Margaret grew up. Her dissatisfaction grew up, too. Her sentiments toward romance were at first nebulous. They developed into those of weariness. They were yet to develop into those of hatred. She studied history and literature. She conscientiously tried to imagine the attraction of those great movements which have fitfully roused the world. She was sad when she thought of her father. He was kind, sincere, clever. He was yet attracted by the queer delusion called *romance*.

She never told him what she thought of his ideals. She at first regarded him with too much reverence. She next believed that he would not understand. She had once or twice tried to declare her convictions in the convent. She had always met with incomprehension. No one believes in a kitten which hates milk.



No one would believe in a daughter of Count Kettle, to whom romance was abhorrent. She was thus forced, step by step, in a certain direction. She did not want to go. Circumstances indicated that she should take it.

The Junior History Class were to present some tableaux at a distribution of prizes. Margaret, now twelve, was asked to take part. She agreed but found, when parts were allotted, that she had been chosen to play "Joan of Arc." At the end of the hour, she went in dismay to Sister Mary Aloysius.

"Find some one else," she begged with tears. "Oh, please, *please*, Sister, find some one else, for I can't—I—I don't think I could really do it."

"That's nonsense, my child," said Sister Mary decisively. "Of course you can do it, and you will. You've exactly the same temperament."

Margaret did it at a cost known to herself. Her trouble was one of many, due, in every case, to the assumptions of well-intentioned people anxious to be kind. She did not escape Joan of Arc when the tableaux were over. She realized that that was the part she had been chosen to play in life. "They are killing me with kindness," she once told herself. She

was right. In an indifferent person devoid of penetration, lay her one hope of being accepted at her own worth.

The girls, at fourteen, were expected to specialize in those subjects towards which they inclined. Margaret's hour drew near. She thought she saw a chance of emphasizing her inclinations and, at the same time, of procuring relief from her environment. The girls were to fill up a form indicating the subjects they wished to take and the reasons (if any) of their wish. Margaret decided that type-writing and commercial book-keeping were congenial. In a round hand, she recorded her wish to study them. She found she was unable to set down her reasons. They would have involved a protest, a long indictment of circumstances. She was next day summoned to the Superior in the drawing-room. It was a restful room with a polished floor, some ebony tables, a few Chippendale chairs, an electric radiator in the fireplace. The Sister Superior was a small friendly lady with an anxious expression, the bright smile of a saint and a dignity which was quite unstudied. She was sitting upright by a three-legged table. With a quick smile, she directed Margaret to a seat facing her. She produced,



from the folds of her black habit, the paper which Margaret had filled. She spread it on the table, pointed to it.

"Please?" she said, with a comical little frown.

Margaret could only repeat that she wanted to study type-writing and book-keeping.

"But you've said that already," the nun pointed out. "I can't let you take them, dear, unless you can give me your reasons." She thought for a little. "You'd simply be miserable with such subjects. You should try something congenial. Now, there's music and poetry, for instance?"

Margaret was silent. . . .

Margaret at sixteen made yet another effort to break the cords, silken, but very strong, which bound her. She again failed. She had now reached that critical period when realization succeeds expectation. The girl becomes the adult not imperceptibly, as in the case of a boy, but with the rapidity of a transformation-scene. It was natural that she should strive for the potentialities of her inheritance. She was well-developed. Her bearing was modest. She was disciplined. Her swelling breasts rounded the bosom of the Saxon-blue frock which was the summer uniform of the

school. Her brown hair hung below her shoulders. It was tied, not plaited, at the level of her neck with a blue ribbon that matched her frock. Her expression was trusting yet troubled. She seemed to question the possibilities of her new impulses and experiences. She seemed afraid, as a wild creature startled by a sweet sound, the significance of which is doubtful.

She spent the vacation of her sixteenth summer, of 1912, as usual, at Killaloe. There was a lull in the storm of Irish affairs. She found her father absorbed in Mexico. A romantic interest of some sort was evidently indispensable to him. Mexico was then at a crisis. Madero had overthrown Diaz and had won to the latter's place. Count Kettle followed the action of this western drama with as much attention as a diplomat. His interest, however, was centred on President Madero.

Such an interest is explicable when it is realized that Madero resembled Count Kettle. Both were visionaries. Both were sincere, ascetic, unpractical. Madero certainly out-rivalled Count Kettle by a belief in himself that bordered upon megalomania. It is possible that Count Kettle might have

developed a similar trait, had he been called to a similar position.

He was, then, a hot partisan of Madero's. Margaret heard with dismay that for many months he had been wanting to go to Mexico, and that he had abandoned the idea only upon Madero's establishment as president, a few weeks before her arrival. Autumn came. She returned to school. Danger threatened Madero in the person of Felix Diaz, the ex-President's nephew. He was promptly suppressed. She yet guessed, from letters, that her father was not satisfied. He was restless, it seemed, and obsessed by the conviction that danger still menaced Madero. Mexico was ostensibly pacified, but there remained at large many tribes with different ideals and mutually hostile leaders. She developed, while her father exchanged fervid letters with Madero, an interest in Mexican affairs that was born of fear lest her father might be somehow involved in them. The nuns and pupils both took this as fresh evidence of her disposition. They were not to blame.

The inevitable happened in November, and she obtained leave from the Superior to spend a week in Dublin with her father and mother, before the former went to Mexico. The letter

announcing the ircoming preceded it only by a day. She was shot, as it were, into the luxury and glitter of the Hibernian Hotel from the simplicity of her cartridge-papered cubicle, with its low white bed, guarded by the silver Spanish crucifix which was a birthday present from her father. To this cubicle she never returned. Her mother decided to live in Dublin during Count Kettle's absence. The house in Merrion Square was opened. Three servants were engaged. It was arranged that Margaret should live with her mother and attend the convent as a day-boarder.

A few minutes' walk south-eastward from the Nelson Pillar brings you to Merrion Square. The centre is a pleasure-ground, vast and neglected and fenced with iron palings. The sides are walled by terraces of red brick houses, tall and silent. One side is traversed by the electric trams, glass-roofed, spacious, smooth. They run to Kingstown and Dalkey by the wooded shores of the Bay. It was on this side overlooking the tram-lines and, beyond these, the pleasure-ground, that the Kettles' house stood.

You stepped from the Square into a dim hall panelled with worm-eaten oak. A wide oak staircase led thence to the upper storys.



The rooms were large and sombre. Their furniture, originally expensive, was now faded. The sashes of the ground-floor windows were partly filled with stained-glass screens which secured privacy from the Square and at the same time added to the gloom. The house, both outside and in, was typical of the eighteenth century. It differed from that period only by its chandeliers, Georgian and elaborate, and its bath-room, early-Victorian and uncomfortable.

Margaret, then, set out every morning for the Convent. The girls, with unconscious irony, now teased her by insisting that it was she who had forced Count Kettle to Mexico. To this she passively assented. How would it have helped to protest that she hated the romance which Mexico was unfolding? They had seen her absorbed for weeks in the details of that very romance. Letters came from her father at long irregular intervals. They concerned themselves chiefly with critical but glowing descriptions of Madero's personality. They ceased in the spring of 1913. Margaret and her mother became uneasy. They soon had reason. On the 9th of February, Reyes and Diaz were freed from prison by the military students of Tlalpan. Reyes was shot in the

Square by the National Palace. This was a triumph for Madero. Margaret tried to believe that the danger which threatened his party was past. The news was still unsettling. It was reported that Diaz was gaining power and (presently) that Madero had been asked to resign. There was no sign of the expected letter from Count Kettle.

Margaret came home from school on a raw afternoon enlivened by deluges of stinging rain. A cold wind had all day been driving black clouds from beyond Howth Head, where the tumbling sea had gathered them. She took off her dripping waterproof in the silent hall which night was already possessing. She wrung out the rat-tailed wisps of hair glued to her forehead. She turned to go upstairs and nearly collided with her mother.

The latter's arm was doubled. She gripped a crumpled newspaper so tightly that it rustled against her black bodice as often as she breathed. Her lips were compressed. Her nostrils quivered, as though she were holding a long breath. There was a bleak expression in her eyes. A few grey hairs, hitherto pushed out of sight, were now visible at her temples. Margaret, seeing them for the first time, was disturbed.



Margaret took her hand.

“Mother, Mother!” she whispered. “You must tell me what is wrong.”

Her mother gave her the paper in silence. She sought the head-lines, in the gathering darkness.

“Oh, I can’t find”—she was beginning; the paper tore, disclosing the middle sheet.

“MADERO SHOT,”

she was able to make out:

“A FRESH MEXICAN DEVELOPMENT.”

A fresh Mexican development!

“You had better come with me,” she said gently to her mother.

She took her arm and persuaded her up the creaking staircase. She led her to the drawing-room. A servant in the basement laughed carelessly; Margaret was reminded of the world’s indifference to individual suffering.

The drawing-room was as deep as the house; it was made up of two rooms thrown into one; there were thus windows front and back, and two antiquated grates. It was carpeted with faded felt and decorated with daguerreotypes; a great gilded harp, with five cords broken, stood at the spot where the room had once

been divided. The roof was low. There were many three-legged stools and a couple of moth-eaten sofas.

Margaret guided her mother to one of these sofas.

"Francis was with him," said her mother dully.

Her mournful eyes watched the paper which Margaret was still holding.

Margaret, too, was bewildered; but she managed to murmur that "she thought perhaps he was safe."

"His letters would be found," said her mother. "Do you think they would spare him, then?"

She began suddenly:

"Anything extravagant. He couldn't keep away from it. Yes, a knight. That is what he should have been. A chivalrous man. O God, help me to bear that! The champion of all the world, you see! But—at the cost of his wife and child." Her hands, hitherto idle, she now clenched, as if the truth of her convention were tangible. "He was eating out his heart for a hopeless—" She broke off listlessly: "No. But I didn't want him to go."

"You didn't—?"

"No. I didn't want him to go." Her voice became appealing. "I was helplessly young when I married him." She went on rapidly: "A young girl, standing on the edge of life. And I jumped in. I jumped blindly and confidently into the prettiest pool, of course. Pretty? I did not know then that blue water is deep water—always; I did not know that. Silly Utopias. Dreams. Chimeras. Moonlight. These were the things with which I turned my head." Her face twitched; she ended more rapidly: "And love! Well, love will sweeten a life, in spite of the bitterness a disappointment brings. But only in spite of the bitterness. The bitterness, you see, remains. Francis! Francis! He has tormented me quite unconsciously. I wish he had beaten me. Beaten me! But what has he ever done—save open my silly eyes to the dreadful scandal of romance."

She broke off in confusion, covered her face with her hands, began to sob. Margaret, in a state of wretchedness and elation, watched her as though she were a fascinating stranger met for the first time. Margaret was cured of that harmless egotism which is natural to every one and, in the young, noticeable; she

was learning that one of her experiences, hitherto unique, was familiar to another.

Her lips parted wonderingly.

“Do you suffer with romance?” she whispered.

“Yes. And he lived for it,” cried her mother in distraction. “And you are your father’s daughter. And so you live for it, too.”

“Oh, no, no, no!” said Margaret. “Don’t you see, mother? I’m your daughter as well. Oh, mother, mother! I wish I had known sooner! I’ve hated romance for years. And I never knew! And you never thought!”

She dropped upon the sofa, flung her arms about her mother, buried her face on her mother’s breast, began to cry. Her mother yearned over her, in a passion of solicitude, pressing her cheek to the nape of her daughter’s neck and kissing her. They had ceased, indeed, to be parent and child. A few poignant seconds stripped them of their mortality. There are no distinctions in the sisterhood of the victimized.

They wept together, while the elder stammered:

“Hate it! Hate it! Never have anything to do with it.”

Margaret presently drew back. She said what she thought.

"It's a sin, a sin! No man should indulge in it."

Her mother grew old again.

"Ah, Margaret, you don't know," she murmured. "You're still too young to realize the fascination some men have for women. You will love and marry. And perhaps you will know, then."

"I shall never marry," vowed Margaret. "Never. Do you hear me, mother? Never."

Her mother smiled.

"We have all said that." She checked a sob. "Yes. That's what we say once. But for most of us, he comes in the end. And he hypnotizes us, then, even though we know that his beliefs spoil our security. And we make a splendid stupid sacrifice of our convictions, which he never appreciates, never realizes, even. Women hate insecurity."

She went on with feeling. There was something prophetic in her manner.

"If ever you do marry, marry a plain man. Tear him from your heart if he's a dreamer, I say! For dreams are insecure things. And he'll only bring you sorrow. For yourself, you know. And your children."



Margaret's eyes widened; her face grew pinched. Life had become horrible. She therefore turned her back upon the scene which epitomized it. She slowly went to a window and began to pluck at the blind-cord. The slanting rain was still falling. The road glistened with muddy rebounding drops. The wind was failing. A yellow fog was assimilating the city.

She felt little interest in a streaming cab which was entering the Square. It drew up at the kerb. Her interest grew greater. The cabman climbed down and struggled with the door. Her interest grew acute. An impossible thought struck her. The door flew back; her father got out.

"Mother! Mother!" she called excitedly.

She wanted to say much more, but words seemed inadequate.

Her mother came so quickly that magic might have brought her.

"Francis!"

She fell. Margaret dropped upon her knees beside her. She murmured that "it was only a faint, a faint." But Death had signed his handiwork. Ugly lips and grey cheeks—such were the characters in which his signature

was written. Margaret, broken-hearted, flung herself on the body and stammered incoherencies. She drew herself up suddenly. She cursed the ideals which, right or wrongly, she was blaming for the tragedy.

## II

We know that Count Kettle and his daughter visited the Carmelite Friary on a dark Sunday evening in the Lent of 1918. We know Count Kettle's motive and the startling decision that the visit brought about. Margaret, as they walked home, was ready to receive innumerable instructions for her guidance in the interview of the morrow. But her father was silent. His silence reminded her of his code. He evidently believed that he ought to trust to her honour. She understood that he was leaving her to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

She, too, was silent. She would tighten her lips gradually and raise her eyebrows, till she could raise them no further. She would then break off, with a meek little toss of her head. She was rather bewildered. The Irish are slow in coming to a conclusion. She had not yet realized the nature of her own sympathies. Her father's dramatic de-

cison had come to her, moreover, as a great shock. Rebellion and consent had competed in her heart from the time the decision was made. She accepted it in the end, with a sigh of resignation. Men, she supposed, were like that—impetuous and unpractical—but it was a great pity.

She hesitated, as the hall-door shut out the quiet night. She then followed her father to his study. The study was perhaps the most pleasant room in the house. It was bright, square, spacious, decorated in the same shade of brown as its neighbour in Killaloe, similarly lined with books. Two saddle-backed arm-chairs faced one another from either side of an old-time fireplace into which a child might have stepped. Her father sat down in one of them. She, still grappling with her problem, sat down upon the arm of the other.

A thought struck her. She looked up, full of animation.

“Father,” she began. She knitted her brow. “Is this thing right, do you think?”

He roused himself from a long reverie and looked at her as though he were puzzled by the question.

“What thing, *ma fille*?”

She shivered.

"Importing guns. You know."

He studied her thoughtfully, with a suggestion of uneasiness. He abruptly raised his hand to his face. He slowly passed it over his exuberant beard, as though he intended to brush off something unpleasant but had remembered in time that his trouble was not material. He then broke into his rare smile, melancholy, transient, disarming.

"Importing guns. Well. There's nothing evil in the mere fact of a gun."

She took him up promptly:

"No. I know that, father. I know that actions are so seldom good or bad of themselves. We must look at the purpose behind them, mustn't we? And the purpose now—Is it right?"

"Yes. I believe it is right."

"And what are we to call it?" she persisted.

He made a sweeping, acquisitive gesture:

"Vindication."

She turned this over for a little with no apparent result. She presently slipped from the arm of her chair. She went, in a business-like way, to one of the shelves, scanned it, pulled out a fat demy quarto volume, bound



in red, which she supported on the edge of the shelf. She rustled the leaves methodically, acknowledged her satisfaction with a lift of her eyebrows, put back the book in its place, returned to her old position.

“Vindication,” she said. “Act of vindicating. Defence. Justification. Support.”

He threw back his head and quietly laughed at her.

“What a baby!” he teased. “Didn’t they teach you English at the Convent? Can’t you talk without the meretricious help of a dictionary?”

She disregarded the interruption and went on seriously:

“Now what were you vindicating, when—” she was sad at the memory, and her voice trembled—“when you went to Mexico? You’ve never told me, father.”

He, too, grew serious.

“I was disappointed in Madero,” he said reluctantly. “That is why I left him so abruptly. He was not struggling for a principle, only for himself.”

“But I believe in fighting for a principle!”

She protested almost in dismay, as if she wished that she did not believe, as if she were

puzzled at finding herself in agreement with her father.

The significance of her remark was lost on him.

"Of course you do," he said lightly. "Or you would be no daughter of mine."

"Ah. But there is more behind it than that," she said with conviction. "I know quite well there is a difference, all the same! For the books you like, why, they're every one of them . . . Well, *mushy* is the word—"

He interrupted her:

"Mushy?"

She smiled indulgently.

"Well, you know what I mean, dear." She reflected. "What do you vindicate by reading a—by reading a book like what I said?"

"Nothing," he admitted, guiltily, after a pause.

"But why do you do it, then?"

He confidently started forward but checked himself, as if he mistrusted the persuasive facility with which he was about to explain. He again made that sweeping acquisitive gesture.

"Escape," he whispered, as though he were ashamed of the admission.

He went on hesitatingly :

“ We inveterate dreamers, we are captivated by fearful odds. A minority claims our allegiance. Attracts us, you know, as a window of steaming bread attracts a starving child. And this, perhaps, makes us impulsive sometimes. We are prone to forget the principle involved. We are carried away by the splendid hopelessness of the cause.” He paused, as if to weigh the words he had spoken. He must have found them justified, for he went on with growing confidence: “ Yes. There is nothing there but the naked truth, I think. That is it! The fascination of a lost cause. That is what drew me to Mexico and Madero, I believe. That is what blinded me to the selfishness of Madero’s motives.” His eyes sparkled. “ But this is enchanting, I say! Most frightfully passive, we are. We accept ourselves too readily. We lose so much by failing to examine our motives. You are quite right. It does us good to define them.” He reflected. “ Well, I have defined them as best I can. I have confessed that I am everlastingly tempted to escape. To escape! From the lies and the selfishness and the gross materialism that are born of money, prestige, place-seeking, comfort—facts. And when a

cause, you see, is almost hopeless, you can be sure that considerations like these are not in the hearts of its supporters." He grew agitated: "But that is not why we strive, as we do, for Ireland, I assure you! I thank God, Margaret, that we are walking a straight road where Ireland is concerned. I am certain of it. There is no question that we are now deluded by the superb forlornness of the cause. No. We are struggling quite simply for a noble sentiment."

She quickly slipped down to the floor. Her eyes were shining.

"Noble sentiment," she said softly. "Like the divine right of kings? The sentiment the Jacobites fought for?"

He nodded.

"Of course."

"Why, I see at last! Why, that expresses it beautifully!" she paused. "And what would you call the sentiment?" she concluded, bending eagerly towards him.

Her sudden question brought him to the ground with a rush. He seemed upset, as if this side of the business had never before disturbed him.

"What would I call it?" he slowly repeated.

"Well, the existence of Ireland as an independent nation, I imagine."

"And would that be happier for the Irish people?"

He grew more upset.

"I have no idea. What has that to do with it?"

"But don't you see, father? There's another way of looking at it. You speak as if practical people were incapable of sympathies, but isn't it just that their sympathies are different? For instance. To decide your sympathies with a cause you ask, What is the noble sentiment that victory will establish? But they ask, What help to the people involved will victory mean? Will it make their condition better? They might say, don't you see, that they had no use for wars and rebellions waged just for the idea of the thing." She saw that he was about to interrupt. She impulsively went on: "Oh, I'm not criticizing—complaining—but I want to understand." She digressed with feminine serenity: "And I can't help thinking of the men who took part in the last rebellion: syndicalists and all those. It doesn't seem consistent that they should be mixed in a business like this."

He smiled with reassurance:



"They, I imagine, are your sympathizers who have asked, Will independence for Ireland make the country more prosperous? They have decided that the answer is in the affirmative."

"Well, then, why did you work them?" she taxed him. "When you want to get away from reality?"

He smiled sadly:

"Shall we say that I regard them collectively as the lance with which I tilt at my windmills? Lance. That is the point. The knight must have a lance. He may hate such facts, but he cannot escape them entirely—"

"But we are not talking about lances. We are talking about people with minds and wills. They are men, not lances. And, tell me," she pleaded, "why should a—a forlorn hope want their help?"

"Great houses have a room for every one."

His answer perplexed her. Much was to happen before she understood it.

She was very tired of the argument. She told herself with a sigh that it led nowhere. It was then useless. She realized afresh that her father and she were as separated as if they lived on different sides of a clear wall of thick glass. They might try, she thought, to com-

municate, each watching the other's lips, each hearing never a sound. . . . She admitted, with her meek little start, that she was becoming speculative. She felt, for a moment, that she was years older than her father.

She decided to go to bed, and irresolutely turned to her father. They were perhaps nearer to an understanding than she suspected. He mistook her intention and imagined she wanted his blessing, a custom of her childhood, which had never quite been abandoned. He very tenderly laid his hand upon her head. Custom dies hard. She dropped upon her knees, before she realized what she was doing.

"God bless you. Pray for me," he said.

He kissed her forehead as she rose.

She turned from him with an incomprehensibly aching heart, in which fear, excitement, anticipation, all were present. She climbed the old staircase to her pompous room (which she hated), where a huge portrait of King Arthur silently outraged her convictions. Her father had hung it with the best intentions. She had never had the heart to remove it. She took off her jacket, unpinned her hat before the slanting mirror on her dressing-table, paused once to study her sensitive face,

loosened her belt, dropped her skirt, carefully took off her blouse. She let down her hair and slipped her arms into a long loose dressing-gown of pale-blue wool.

No fire had been lit. She pulled up a chair, sat down before the dressing-table, drew close her gown. Her mind was at rest, as she slowly brushed her hair. She was aware of a turmoil within, but she shrank from the effort of analysing it. She presently finished, pushed back her chair, rose. A *prie-Dieu*, walnut stained, stood at the foot of her bed. She had fastened to the wall above it that silver crucifix which had guarded her bed in the Convent. She seemed, as she thoughtfully approached it, more incongruous than ever. She was a modern jewel locked in an antiquated casket. She abruptly crossed herself, slowly knelt down, concentrated her attention.

"Almighty and Eternal God, I adore Thee," she began.

Her longings expressed themselves with a rush. She abandoned with a sob the set form she was using.

"O God!" she whispered. "You are great, and I know that nothing matters except You. But all the same, I do want some temporal happiness as well. I do want it!

You know I have no vocation for this sort of thing. I can save my soul far better if I live the life that I'm suited for—not staying in the clouds as father does, but moving about in the world and doing something useful, and enjoying myself, when it doesn't interfere with my duty to You. O my Jesus, have pity on me! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! O Jesus! When You came into this world for my sins, You were so kind—and practical. There wasn't anything sentimental about You. O Jesus! Have pity on me! Pity me! Give me some brightness in my life! Let me mix with my own kind and be happy! I can't see my way at all. I don't know how it can be done, but You can do it. I believe that. It would be a miracle. But You can work it. Thy will be done. But please, *please* deliver me from all this, if it be Thy will! I don't know at all what I'm to say to this man to-morrow. I don't know how to explain to father the different sort of girl I am from him. Oh, I don't know the meaning of the strange new things I'm thinking and feeling every day of my life! Holy Virgin Mary, pray for me! St. Margaret of Scotland, pray for me! St. Veronica, pray for me!"

## 88 THE INSCRUTABLE LOVERS

She bent forward, wordless but passionate. The folds of her gown fell back, as she rose. Her shining arms were discovered. Her eyes were full of tears, as she murmured in a low, humble voice the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*. The occasional creaking of the bed, as its occupant stirred in a restless sleep, was presently the only sound.



### III

She set off for Macaig's office without knowing what to say. She was once more outraging her tastes for her father's sake. She would always do so, as long as she loved him best. His feelings would only have been hurt had she refused to go. She would have benefited him not at all, as he would then have risked arrest by going himself. She might have pretended. She might have spent two hours in a park, returned home, told her father that young Macaig was implacable. But she was incapable of such deceit; the thought of it was more distasteful than the thought of the coming interview. She finally decided logically, if desperately, that she might as well make a clean breast of the affair to Macaig, as she would thus save her father at least from the results of his folly. She determined that she would afterwards go back to him, tell him what she had done, face the consequences.

Her father had persevered in his policy of silence. He had diffidently handed her Macaig's

letter. She now gripped it, as she threaded the buildings on the quay in her search for Macaig's office; she might have been a conspirator, gripping an explosive of which she was secretly afraid. She felt like a conspirator, indeed, and the letter had this resemblance to an explosive: its function was to disturb.

She found the office with difficulty. The building, which had once housed it, had been destroyed by the bombardment of 1916. The business was now carried on in temporary premises: a small wooden shed, above the door of which the original sign-board, long and massive, seemed incongruous. She entered the office, a sooty room, with a raftered roof. Three black-haired clerks were absorbed in their scribbling; one anæmic typist was pounding her machine indifferently. A clerk suspiciously raised his eyes. He advanced in confusion when he perceived the visitor's sex. Margaret was presently ushered through an ill-fitting door into a second room.

This room was stuffy and very small. It was lit by a sky-light. The floor was covered with coconut matting; the walls were as bare as those of the outer room. It was warmed by a portable heater; a duplex wick was

dully flaming behind the ruby glass. A desk, wooden and hacked, slanted across a corner of the room. Margaret whimsically told herself that it had been thus placed to defend the angle behind it.

Young Macaig was sitting at the desk. He was broad-shouldered, with a faint stoop and a long face resolute and pale. He had steady grey eyes—like her father's, she thought, except for their lack of brilliance. His nostrils were somewhat fastidious; his lips were sensitive. He had strong black hair, smoothly brushed and parted on the left side. She decided that he was probably a scholar. He seemed capable of pity, a man who had outgrown many illusions but kept his sense of humour.

Such was her impression of the person on whose mercy she was to throw herself. Her survey was necessarily quick, for he stood up, as she came in, and stepped round the desk to meet her.

"Miss Kettle?" he asked.

His tone, if formal, was pleasant.

"Yes. I . . ."

"Count Kettle's daughter?" he went on, before she had framed her sentence.

She murmured that she was. He energetically drew up a cane chair, which was behind the

door. He retired to his desk. They both sat down. She leant forward and laid the letter on his desk.

"I've come to see you about this letter," she began softly.

He picked it up and skimmed it.

"Yes. We posted you this on Friday. Is there something you don't understand?"

She nervously bent forward. She plucked at the knee of her skirt. Her eyes were troubled. She suddenly came to a decision, slowly leant back, avoided his eyes. She was pink and embarrassed and rather pensive.

She heard her voice, as though it were a stranger's. She spoke simply:

"I only want to tell you the truth. But it's so difficult sometimes to tell a simple thing like the truth"—she stole a glance at him—"though I don't in the least know why, for if we all spoke the truth, a great deal of nonsense would be saved. My father wants me to see you about your letter. He gave it to me, you know." She found that she was less nervous. "But he would be angry," she went on, with more animation, "if he knew what I am going to ask you. My father is not a business-man. He thinks your father is cynically indifferent, he said. No. He doesn't mean that for

rudeness. I—I can be certain of that, Mr. Macaig; oh, I can, indeed!” She became somewhat incoherent. “He only means that he thinks your father would be willing to bring the goods you speak about in your letter, no matter what the goods might be. So long as there was no risk,” she explained. “And now I’m going to be quite frank, and tell you what the cases would contain—”

“I had better tell you something else,” he wearily broke in. “We are a business firm, and therefore we have no room for sentiment. If a course of action isn’t likely to produce a practical result, nothing induces us to pursue it. Expensive philanthropy isn’t in our line. We believe that the man who goes out of his way to look for trouble, when he’s not bound to do so, is a fool. We don’t for a moment allow the heart to dominate the head. We don’t accept contracts because they appeal to the emotions. It’s as well you should know our policy. It may stop you in time from making an appeal to our emotions.”

She regarded him with approval, this admirable young man who so beautifully expressed himself in sentiments with which she entirely agreed. She suddenly blushed and looked away. She realized that she was showing her approval.



She had supposed in her ignorance that all men were romantic children. Here, she told herself, was the glorious refutation of her theory! If only her father were like that! She mentally abased herself before Macaig . . .

"Your point of view?" he was saying.

She recalled herself, with a start.

"Yes. My point of view," she stammered.

"Why. You yourself have said——"

He stood up, immediately sat down, murmured with the deepest feeling:

"Myself. Ah!"

His remark interested her. It seemed as if he were realizing himself for the first time. He straightened his shoulders and went on: "Yes." She was sure he was struggling with his conscience. "I shall tell you." He laid his arms upon the desk and leant across it, looking at her with agitation. "You've said that my father is indifferent. You are quite mistaken. At least he is no longer indifferent. He is your enemy—in a sense that is." He drummed upon the desk, as if to call her attention to the next point. "And I have no power. They want to betray your father," he went on, warming to his subject. "As to the matter referred to in my letter, don't you see that they can't quietly accept the

transit of your father's goods, and then betray him to the police ; for that would be bad for the firm ? They have instructed me to write this letter. And what does it involve ? Either your father must tell a lie, or admit the nature of his goods. And either way, they have him."

She interrupted, almost with disappointment :

" They ! You say *they*, now. You're constantly saying *they*. But what do you mean by *they* ? I don't-understand at all ! A minute ago it was *we*—when you told me about your principles. I understood that. Aren't you, too, in the firm ? "

His face twitched, perhaps with a spasm of pain.

" Yes," he said shortly. " Yes. I am in the firm."

" Well, then ? "

But he paid no attention ; he suddenly went on :

" I shouldn't have spoken. No. I shouldn't. You'd better forget what I've told you. I can do nothing."

" Have you no influence ? " She was oblivious, in her excitement, to the peculiarity of the fact of his friendliness.

" Yes. I suppose I have." He inwardly

debated something. "But, Miss Kettle," he at last went on, "I must tell you something more."

He leant back. He bit his lip, as if he were discontented.

"I'm crossing this evening to Holyhead, and then I shall spend one night at home. And after that, I'm going to Portsmouth. Either my father or I must go—a Government job, shipping, you know—and my father wants me to attend to it, as I can be better spared than he. I must stay for almost a year. For the whole time, I'll be practically out of the firm. I shall be too busy to have any say in its management. So you see, Miss Kettle, my influence will be worth nothing."

He suddenly raised his head.

"Believe me, I sympathize . . ."

But she was now alive to the danger which threatened her father. She was paying little attention to Macaig.

"Can nothing be done, then?" She was almost crying. "Is there nothing that will move your father?"

He again lowered his head.

"Nothing I know of. It isn't that he is a wickedly hard man. He is not so bitter as he seems. He's just obstinate; he's old; he

has no imagination whatever. I don't believe that he could hate a person, after he had once met him. Without that, he would have a prejudice that you couldn't possibly break down. To make him change his mind, he would need to be told, to see you telling him, as I do now, so to speak. No," he decided, "you couldn't remove his prejudice without letting him see you."

"Is that all?" said Margaret. "Why," she went on practically, "then I'll let him see me, of course."

"Your father will take you? Yes?"

"Father won't," she promptly answered. "I'll go to him myself—alone."

"Alone?"

"Why not, Mr. Macaig?"

"But he'd have to be stopped at once!"

"Then I'll go to him at once. I'll cross with the steamer to-night."

He regarded her with amazement. He once or twice stirred, as if he were becoming excited.

"You'll cross to my father to-night?" he said. "But I'm crossing to-night, and there's only the one boat. Don't you see, people may talk? They may say that you are crossing with me. This is splendid, of course! But—Good heavens! You are . . ."

She laughed.

"Oh, no, no! Whichever boat I were to take, there would be young men on board of it! So what difference does it make, if one of them happens to be a man I've spoken to for twenty minutes?"

She rose. Her eyes were unnaturally bright. Their lids fluttered. Her cheeks were red. She felt that her point of view was the right one, but she was not as self-confident as she would have Macaig believe. She would have given a good deal for some one who would go to Scotland in her place. She did not belong to the type which cries for the moon. She was already planning the details of her journey. She sat down suddenly, hid her face with her arm, began to cry.

"I say . . . Look here . . ." he said in an aghast voice. He still remained behind the desk.

She heard him, was grateful for his solicitude. Something innate prevented her from showing that she heard.

"I beg you!" he went on, more distressed.

She snatched at the word *beg*, with no regard for its context. She looked up.

"Beg! Yes. That's just it. I'd have to beg, if I wanted to cross to-night. I've only



a shilling in my purse. I've no money for the ticket."

She stopped crying. She dabbed her eyes with a lace handkerchief not too small, for she liked to be practical even in little matters. He seemed nonplussed.

"But—but can't you get it from your father?"

Her hand fell to her lap. She looked at him reproachfully. She murmured:

"He is not a business-man like you, haven't I told you? How could I make him understand? He would never allow me to go! He would say he didn't mind whether he were saved or not."

"You would go without his knowledge? Yes?"

"I would."

"But do you believe it would be right . . . ?"

"Of course it would be right! Isn't it natural I should think of my father?"

"Yes," he slowly agreed. "I see that. I suppose it is natural. I was at a loss for a minute to reconcile . . . But of course you must think of your father."

To this she answered nothing. She waited expectantly. She regarded him as her last hope. An expression of concern had settled

on his face, but she could not guess what was troubling him. He drew a breath, parted his lips, smiled curiously, as if he were watching an experiment. He murmured very distinctly :

“ Yes. I will.”

He rose. He straightened his shoulders, as if to cast off a burden. He then came from behind his desk. It might have been something symbolic which he was putting aside. He said :

“ I’ve been thinking things over, and I shall be very pleased to lend you what money you may need, if you still want to go to my father.”

“ You will ? ” she cried. “ You’ll lend me the money for my ticket ? ”

“ If you feel you can trust me,” he added. “ If you feel that you’re justified in taking it.”

“ Oh. I can trust you ! ” she said. “ That’s funny. It’s you who should be wondering if you’re justified in trusting me ! ”

In her gratitude, she took his hand. She blushed and released it, as she saw the effect that her action was having.

“ I’ll give it you now,” he said hurriedly, “ for I daresay you’ll have shopping to do. Will ten pounds be enough, do you suppose ? ” He recklessly went on : “ Or fifteen pounds ? Twenty pounds ? Twenty-five pounds ? ”

## IV

A musty train was leaving a suburban platform, Margaret was sitting in the corner of a blue-cushioned compartment. She saw the name of the station : " Great Western Road." The station lamps were feeble. The train left them for velvet darkness, occasionally relieved by winking clusters of lights, the last outposts of the city. The puffing of the engine grew louder, drifts of grey steam materialized out of the darkness, fluttered, like great moths, against the window, vanished. Some one let down the window and the pungent scent of moist fields filled the compartment.

Margaret appeared contented. She was contented—in a sense. She was also watchful. Every one is watchful, when visiting a foreign country, dark and unknown. Instinct compels one. This instinct is a legacy from a past when men stepped from their own familiar valley into the next as softly as a dog steps from its own into its neighbour's yard. Margaret was trying to draw some positive

conclusion from the curtained landscape, into which she was further penetrating with every turn of the wheels. She did not succeed. She was always on the point of receiving a hint from indeterminate objects, baffling yet familiar, which appeared only to vanish like the steam from the engine. Her failure vexed her.

She would close her eyes and be possessed by the illusion that the train was travelling backwards. She would open her eyes. The illusion would persist till they crashed through a cutting, and the sight of its walls reassured her. Opening and closing her eyes she experimented with this illusion. Her mind grew uncertain. The world of reality and that of dreams were confused. She soon found that her eyes were closing of themselves. She was sleepy.

Her face was to the engine. Macaig was opposite. He was in theory looking over some letters, but it was clear that he too was nervous—though from different motives—for he constantly fidgeted. He would anxiously study his companion, as often as he thought he was unobserved. He regarded her as a puzzle which he accepted without solving. He presently collected his letters. He slipped them into the elastic band of a morocco pocket-book

which he drew from the breast of his coat. He leant forward and spoke in a low voice.

“Bearsden is next.”

Margaret had been so unnerved by the manner of her mother's death, five years before, that she had lain in a critical state till long after the funeral. She was unconscious (perhaps, mercifully) of all that was passing around her. Her collapse was followed by neurasthenia. She never went back to school. Her father took her abroad. They wandered by easy stages through Italy and the south of Spain for nearly a year. She became her normal self. A veiled timidity and an aversion to the tragic were the only apparent changes that her experience had wrought in her.

The latter of these changes restrained her from even a hint of the revelation that preceded her mother's seizure. The former was the origin of her shrinking manner, so fascinating, so provocative of a wish to comprehend and to protect. The men and women whom she met were mostly romantic. She could not help regarding them as partly responsible for her mother's death. She told herself in vain that her attitude was a morbid one. Two women in succession betray a man—he becomes



a woman-hater. A girl's life is spoiled by a drunken husband—she becomes a Prohibitionist. A party of plotters, who happen to be Catholic, incite a massacre—the Huguenot spirit is created. Once bitten twice shy, of course ; but the three given examples all show the fallacy of drawing universal conclusions from particular premises. . . .

The ostrich buries its head in order to escape trouble. It is not unique in this. . . .

She began to forget. Black, which she had vowed to wear for the rest of her life, was put aside in favour of the warmer colours, with bright touches at her throat, waist, wrists. Her soft eyes grew softer still. Their reproachful expression deepened, as if her need were becoming urgent. A great restlessness would at times possess her. She would wander into the country in a mood of tenderness, seeking she knew not what. She would sometimes catch her breath at the presentiment of a mighty pain, which never made itself felt. She would probably have chosen a husband, but a dead woman held her back. Something would warn her, as she secretly criticized a suitor: "He and his like killed my mother." She would remember the latter's words: "If you ever marry,

marry a plain man. Tear him from your heart, if he's a dreamer. Dreams are insecure things." She would pray in a dark corner of some great church. Other silent women were also there. God alone can say what they were wanting. It is futile and presumptuous to guess at the nature of a petition for which the originators are unable to find words.

She never succeeded in forgetting her trouble. Ireland constantly reminded her. She was living in Killaloe when the Rebellion of 1916 occurred. She there passed three terrible days. Her father, in Limerick, was committing a score of acts each of which was foolhardy enough to earn him death. They were banished to Dublin. She felt that she was again on the brink of collapse. Her religion had always consoled her. The Catholic Church, with its practical precepts, wholesome outlook, cautious progress, was the sanest fact that she had yet encountered. She now plunged herself into a round of charitable activities which not only distracted her but also reassured her with the most practical results. Her fears quieted.

Her father roused them again. He began to busy himself with the foundation of the Society of St. Patrick. She found, to her

dismay, that he expected her to take part in its affairs. She was forced at least to come in contact with them. She sadly told herself that there could be but one end to the Society. She had not the courage to withdraw from it. She could not face a renewal of the suspense which had sickened her in Killaloe. She kept in touch with events. It was better, she felt, to know than to suspect. Her father was a fire-eater. She was playing with fire. . . . Her fears again quieted.

They were roused for the third time by the discovery that her father was trying to import arms into Ireland. She was at first too horrified to comprehend. She spoke and behaved as usual, like a poor priestess performing rites rendered meaningless by the death of the religion they symbolized. She watched the development of the tragedy with slow realization of its meaning. She gave up watching it. She found that she was expected to be one of the actors. Her father's abrupt: "You shall go," as he gave her the task of interviewing young Macaig, had at last shown her what she conceived to be her duty. She felt that the interview would end disastrously. She thought it better that she, rather than her father, should be the victim. In a spirit of

sacrifice she accepted the burden laid on her. Martyrdom has its compensations. She began to experience the exalted tranquillity of martyrdom.

We know the result of the interview. She had nerved herself for a blow; instead she had received a caress. She faintly hoped that she would be able to avert disaster, but she felt that the price she must pay would be a heavy one. Macaig had promised her father's safety at the price of a visit to Scotland. The price seemed incredibly cheap in comparison with that which she was expecting to pay. Macaig became her hero. His hands had lifted the burden from her shoulders. A mere visit to Scotland! In the revulsion of feeling she was experiencing she could have contemplated a visit to Australia. There are two alternatives which we reject in peace but accept in war. A prisoner, sentenced to death, will regard the doubtful alternative of leading a forlorn hope as if it were identical with safety.

She believed that her father's health and happiness would be benefited, were he finally divorced from the experiment of engineering rebellion in Ireland. She thus accepted the duty of attempting to stultify the consequences which his experiment was producing. She

would free him from himself, as it were. She would enlist the elder Macaig's sympathies by admitting the repugnance with which her father's methods inspired her. She would seek an alliance with the elder Macaig—and thus disarm him.

Such were the resolutions that she slowly formed during the hours that succeeded her departure for Scotland. . . .

The train stopped with a jerk of brakes. Brought back from her thoughts she rubbed the window with the leather strap. She looked out curiously on a darkly glistening line of metal. The arrival platform was on the other side. The departure platform was lighted only when a train was at rest. A taciturn porter held the door as she preceded Macaig from the compartment. She waited, while Macaig told him about a suit-case which had come from Glasgow in the van. Macaig then invited her to the congested exit.

She touched his arm :

“Do you live near the station?” she asked, as he patiently turned.

“About a mile and a half out, along the Aberfoyle Road. But I telephoned for a cab from Glasgow.”



"Are you sure your aunt will be expecting me?"

"You don't need to trouble about that. I quite understand, but my aunt is accustomed to strangers coming to my father on business."

"For I'd rather stay at an hotel."

"There's no hotel here. Really, you don't need to worry."

She sighed but had to be content. He at least had thought of everything. He had planned the journey as she herself would have planned it. She was more worried than she cared to admit. She consoled herself by thinking that it was not every man who would have telephoned from Glasgow for a cab. She was grateful to him, too, for treating the episode as a matter of course—as she wished to treat it, in order to stifle a faintly uneasy conscience. Most women like or dislike a man not on the ground of his virtues or vices, but according as his little actions please or displease them.

Macaig led her to the solitary cab, which awaited them, relinquished in her favour the seat facing the horse, sat down opposite. The suit-case was presently brought and lodged with the driver. They jolted through the dark unpaved streets lined with spreading

trees. Behind the trees an occasional light was visible, suggestive of the large houses which made up the suburb. The road grew steeper. The lights drew closer to the road as if the cab were now in a district where smaller houses were the fashion. Margaret had chosen to have the windows down. The spring air, pregnant with the scent of leaves, blended with the smell of shabby leather which pervaded the cab.

The cab turned to the left at right-angles to the road which it had hitherto travelled. It was evident that they had passed beyond the suburb and were now in a country road. Macaig leant forward to inform Margaret in the retiring manner which, she was learning, was habitual to him, that "they had less than a mile to go," and to repeat his assurance that "his aunt would be expecting her." She wondered if the repetition of this fact was inspired by the lonely darkness which might be supposed to be making her nervous. He did not again move till the cab stopped at an avenue gate. It was barred like a Union Jack. Its white paint rendered it dimly visible. He anticipated the driver in opening it, and she recorded the fact as a further example of his forethought.

The cab slowly mounted a steep avenue,

irregularly bordered with high trees, and halted at a stone step. The house, as Margaret could discern it, was square, solid and imposing. A gleam escaped by the fan-light. She thought that the house looked uninhabited. She at once reminded herself that lights were brighter in Ireland. She left the cab. The house-door opened—a plump parlourmaid, tall and self-satisfied, came down the three low steps. She looked uneasy at the sight of Margaret but accepted her despatch-case.

Young Macaig also left the cab. He told the driver to bring in the suit-case. He then guided Margaret up the steps. The servant followed. She still appeared uneasy. She lacked that expressionless capability which one might have expected her to show. The hall, lofty and formal, was lighted by a stained-glass lantern. A yellow flicker of gas was the origin of the gleam which Margaret had noticed at the fan-light. The house was quiet. It struck Margaret that a tactful hostess would have put in an appearance in the hall. She was saddened and puzzled by this neglect. She glanced at her sponsor. He seemed as puzzled as she.

That stolid servant, breathing heavily, regarded them with confusion.

"Annie," said Macaig, "would you mind telling them that Miss Kettle and I are here?"

He turned to settle with the cabman.

"I beg pardon?"

"Tell them we're here," he brusquely repeated.

"Yes, sir," she sheepishly agreed. But she still lingered. "Who will I tell?" she asked tentatively.

## V

This naïve question had a startling effect on Macaig. He smartly turned, forgot the cabman, fixed the servant with a bewildered stare, in which, however, indignation at her idiocy was predominant. She dropped her eyes but stood her ground as though delicately to contend that her question was justified. Margaret, with a worried expression, looked from one to the other, as if she were a judge with a mission to decide which was sane. She was about to question Macaig, when he forestalled her.

“ But—where is Miss Macaig ? ” he patiently asked the servant.

“ Left, sir.”

“ Left ? ” He turned this over. “ But—well, I mean—when did she leave ? ”

“ She left yesterday by the four-sixteen.”

“ Where’s my father, then ? ” He spoke with the air of a man who had remembered a right which he must claim, if he hoped to get it.

“ He’s left too, sir. Yesterday evening by the seven-forty.”



"But what on earth—" He spoke in a vexed tone and studied the floor. "Good heavens!"

The servant grew communicative.

"I think he had to go to Portsmouth suddenly, sir. He got a letter and a telegram. He said he didn't know when he would be able to get back. So Miss Macaig went up to Glasgow before him to buy some things he would need. She's coming back on Thursday afternoon. And she's staying, I think, at Pollokshields, because the trains from here didn't suit. She said that Cook and me would do for you for the short time till she came back."

"But didn't she tell you—I mean, didn't you know that Miss Kettle here was coming?"

"No, sir."

"But—Oh, I say, I sent a telegram!"

"A telegram came for Miss Macaig, but of course we didn't open it, sir." She stopped for a moment to breathe heavily with complete self-satisfaction. She concluded: "It's lying on the dining-room mantelpiece, beside the letter that Mr. Macaig wrote before he went."

Young Macaig waived further explanations and fairly bolted for the dining-room. Margaret remained in the dim hall. She was upset but

tried to appear composed. She was conscious that she was an object of unfavourable interest to the servant and the cabman. The latter, having put down the suit-case, now waited ostentatiously for orders, like a faithful executioner, ready to slay or to liberate as his superior might decree. The former, by her covert yet intent scrutiny, suggested that Margaret ought to withdraw.

The door, through which Macaig had disappeared, faced the front-door. A bright beam escaped it and cut off a corner of the hall. It was clear that at least one room was ready for the son of the house. There were the sound of rapid footsteps, the scrape of a chair, the rasp of tearing paper. There was silence. Macaig then returned. He was walking excitedly and holding an open letter. His dark complexion was flushed. His faint stoop was accentuated as if by the burden of the news he was bringing. He approached Margaret, stopped, hesitated. He cleared his throat and raised his voice. His remarks were apparently meant to be an announcement—and an exculpation.

“I’m sorry to have to tell you,” he began, “that my father has had to go unexpectedly to Portsmouth. You remember I said in

Dublin that I expected to go there myself? Well, it seems—he says in this letter—that the business was too pressing to wait my return. He's had three urgent intimations from the Admiralty, he says. So of course he had to go, and he doesn't know when he may be able to get back. My aunt is stopping in Glasgow for a night or two. So I'm afraid—Well, things have turned out like this. So there isn't any one in the house to receive you. I apologize most heartily for the trouble I am causing you. Meanwhile we must be content with the next best thing."

He returned to his natural voice.

"When does the last train leave for Glasgow, Annie?"

"I'm not sure, sir. Nine-forty-three?" She glanced, half in interrogation, at the cabman.

"Ay. That's right. Nine-forty-three's the last train for Glasgow."

"Oh, I say! Surely not?" murmured Macaig.

He was convinced, however, by a duet of assurances from the servant and the cabman. The former's voice predominated. No one is more positive than the man or woman who has had doubts but has finally condescended to be convinced.

Macaig slowly pulled out his watch.

"Good heavens!" he sharply exclaimed.

"What is it? What is it?" asked Margaret.

"We've got fourteen minutes in which to catch that train! That's what it is," he replied.

He nervously smiled. He stood, for perhaps fifteen seconds, holding his watch on the palm of his right hand. There was something fatalistic in his attitude. He seemed powerless to protest in the face of such extraordinary bad luck. He put away his watch absently, tightened his lips, turned to the cabman.

"To your cab, quick!" he directed. "You must drive us like lightning to the station."

His words broke the spell which had been cast upon every one by his statement of the case. Margaret laughed. The cabman turned. The servant snatched the suit-case. There was no reason in her action, unless she had conceived a suspicion of the cabman's honesty. Macaig hurried Margaret to the door. His hand was on her arm, and he carried the case that held her belongings. They went down the steps and re-entered the waiting cab.

It started so quickly that they were both thrown backwards. They sat down together. He scarcely noticed the greater intimacy into

which they had been cast (so literally), for he once more pulled out his watch and vainly tried to read its dial. The cab was swinging and plunging. The horse was doing its utmost. A badly-screened light soon showed that they had again reached the suburb. Macaig pocketed his watch and turned to his companion.

"I expect it will be all right, yet," he told her. "The trains are usually late. And perhaps I am a little fast."

She did not reply.

"You are not angry?" he went on. "You don't find this . . . disgusting, I hope?"

She stirred impatiently and averted her head.

"I find it silly." There was a pause. "I think I am hungry," she added.

Her eyes were so wistful that it was difficult to believe that she was no more than hungry. Her mental troubles were nearly forgotten, however. They were real enough but out-rivalled by a physical longing which sentimentalists persist in disregarding. It has, however, played its part in history.

"I wonder," she meditatively went on.

The rumbling wheels must have drowned her previous remark. For he now leant forward expectant of some helpful observation.



"I wish there was a dairy open," she said.  
"Or somewhere where I could get a bun!"

He found this astonishing. They topped an incline before he had time to reply. They were now in sight of the railway. He bent over her, brushed the glass with his sleeve, concentrated his attention on a twinkling point, a signal lamp outside the station.

"No," he said, eagerly. "No. I don't see any sign of the train. I believe we shall be all right. I don't believe it is signalled. Yes. I honestly think that the signal is still up."

Margaret also bent forward. She looked in the other direction—at the station—and she saw a chain of cheerfully lighted carriages and a spray of red sparks, as the train left. She sadly leant back and placed her hand on Macaig's arm, thus interrupting his flow of optimism. He hastily turned. No explanation was needed. The winking tail-lights were by this time disappearing rapidly. The cab drew up at the station, a goal which had dwindled to insignificance. There was nothing unusual in the disappointment. The cup is often drained, through a hole in the bottom, as we raise it to our lips.

The cabman got down and opened the door.

They did not try to alight. They looked at one another. They had stopped at a darkened lamp which feebly illuminated the cab. Macaig smiled comically, drawing down his lips. Margaret was again conscious of her approval of him.

"What are we to do?" she asked trustfully.

"I don't know. Glasgow, I suppose. Driving."

"But can I not stay here? Is there not an inn, even?"

He murmured that "there certainly wasn't."

"Have you no friends, then?"

"Not here," he explained, with a shake of the head. "We have not been long settled here. Only about two months. We hardly know a soul."

The cabman put in:

"I'm not sure that I follow you, Mr. Macaig. But I canno' tak' you to Glasgow to-night."

"Why not?" Macaig demanded.

"The horse," said the cabman brusquely. "That's why not."

"But haven't you another?"

"No. I've no' another horse."

"Isn't there a motor, then, in the place?"

"Ay. There's a motor right enough. But

what I'm wanting to know is this: Have you a permit for the petrol?"

Macaig had evidently not a permit, for he looked uncomfortable.

"Well, drive to Killermont," he said, on the spur of a happy thought. He turned to explain to Margaret. "Killermont. The car-lines come out as far as that."

Margaret, much to her own surprise, found herself deserted by the common sense which had hitherto sustained her. Everything she had attempted or done fell out perversely from its context and thus grew meaningless. It appeared, too, for all the sane outlook upon which she prided herself, that she had behaved foolishly. She was hardly just to herself. She did not consider the short time she had had in which to save her father from the consequences of his romantic actions. She was, of course, disheartened by her journey, by the surprises of a strange country, by hunger, by the cabman's hostile manner. She did not realize the truth. She did realize that she was incapable of further effort.

"No," she said, partly in tears. "I can't drive to—to whatever place you said."

—He seemed mystified.

"But why not? It is less than two miles. We'll catch a car, and I'll take you straight to my aunt."

"I don't want your aunt," she retorted. "And I won't go riding for miles and miles in the tram," She softened her tone. She was highly ashamed of her temper. "I can't go on," she concluded with decision. "I'm hungry. And I'm tired. I must rest."

She was afraid he would try to argue the point. He did not do so. She further softened, as she realized his respect for her wishes. She admired him, too, for the quiet authority with which he told the cabman to drive back to the house. His manner subdued the man. She pretended to be more tired than she was, as the cab clumsily wheeled. She leant against the leather cushion and partially closed her eyes that she might have more liberty in which to study Macaig. They did not exchange a word. The horse crawled.

Their arrival was unexpected. They stood in an awkward group, while Macaig rang the bell. The complacent parlourmaid eventually opened the door. The crooked set of her cap and the presence of a toast-crumb on her lower lip made it easy to conclude that she

had been disturbed in the midst of supper. Macaig settled with the cabman and followed Margaret into the dim hall. The gas fluttered, as the parlourmaid shut the door.

Turning to the parlourmaid, Macaig began :  
“ Will you look after Miss Kettle ? She will want some supper in the dining-room.”

Margaret's wits had returned. Her surroundings were in a sense familiar.

“ But you need supper, too,” she said. “ You will have supper along with me ? ”

He hesitated.

“ Very well.”

“ Very well,” she echoed him.

She followed the servant upstairs.

The servant led her to Miss Macaig's bedroom. Margaret thankfully took off her hat and sponged her face with water, hot and stinging, which was presently brought in a slim apple-green can. She tidied her hair, as best she could, and went downstairs.

She had never hitherto considered the unconventionality of her position. It had come about gradually, arisen from the fact that Macaig and she had crossed in the same boat. And (as she had sensibly pointed out) there was nothing unconventional in that. A hat,



however, is so symbolic to a woman that, when she takes it off, her action is usually significant. Margaret, to her indignation, felt the want of her hat. She told herself that she was absurd; that it would have been prudish to come down to supper in a hat. That a sensible girl should behave sensibly. That conventions are general principles which must be broken in particular cases. Her arguments were useless, however. Something insisted on the superficial aspect of the case: that she was going alone to the table of a man whom she scarcely knew. . . .

Her scruples did not favour a dignified entry into Macaig's dining-room.

The dining-room was oppressive, square and high-roofed, with two doors, one from the service-pantry. There were three tall windows in a line and a shuttered French-window which led to a conservatory. The walls were a deep red. A Persian carpet matched the walls. There were three dark oil paintings in heavy dull-gold frames.

A solid table was covered with a shining cloth. Silver and cutlery, set for two, sparkled under the brightness of an incandescent mantle. Macaig was loitering by the green hearth. His faint stoop was accentuated. He was

thoughtful. He met Margaret with a smile of welcome, a sympathetic smile, full of intelligence, as though he wished to convey that he was appreciative of the situation's humour. He was slightly nervous, she decided. His nervousness put her at her ease.

They sat down to table. Annie served them with supper. Margaret crossed herself twice, before sitting down. She became aware that Macaig was looking at her with a curiously eager expression. He hesitated. He then satisfied himself on a point which had evidently occurred to him.

"You are a Catholic? Yes?"

"I am."

They had fillets of sole, wild duck with Bigarade sauce, Maraschino jelly, black coffee rather spoilt through lack of sugar. They finished supper. He made no sign of a move but, pushing back his chair, asked if "she had any objection if he smoked a Virginian cigarette." She told him she had not. Drawing a shabby leather case from his breast-pocket, he chose a cigarette at random. He lit it, blew out a grey cloud, settled himself in his chair.

"You must stay here the night," he began.

She had been lost in a meek little reverie. She now looked up.

"I suppose I must."

"I've explained to Annie," he went on, "and she's giving you the blue room. It's rather comfortable, and you must ask her for everything you want. I shall walk to Killermont—and take the car to Glasgow."

He stopped with relief, as though he considered that the matter was settled.

"But why?" she asked.

"There's no hotel here."

"But what do you mean? I don't see. What do you want with a hotel? Why! Do you mean"—she flushed—"that you can't stay the night in this house because I am here?"

"Certainly."

"Then, I shall not stay here either! Indeed I shall not! You're tired with the journey, travelling all last night and on your feet to-day as well. It's a shame. I wonder you don't see it. You can't walk miles at this time of night, when you're not rested. You are not fit for it. I believe it would kill you. I can't have your death on my hands."

He looked aghast.

"But of course I can't stop here for the

night. That's nonsense. That would be—really—impossible. Just think for a minute, and you will realize. Don't you see? Good heavens! Surely you don't know what a place this is, what an awful hole for scandal? By this time to-morrow you would be the talk of the village, and I can't imagine how I could possibly defend you. I'm most heartily sorry for—everything. But now we must make the best of it."

He anxiously pulled at his cigarette. Margaret considered his remarks. She was soon unable to repress tears of mortification.

"It's hateful. I bring nothing but trouble, and I meant to be no trouble. I thought I should make things perfectly all right. Yes. It's hateful of you to talk as you did."

"But listen . . ."

"No. I won't listen!"

"But honestly I shall be all right. Killermont is only three miles from here. If I start now, I'll be in time for the last car. I've planned the thing carefully, while you were taking off your hat upstairs. I shall go to a hotel the moment I arrive in Glasgow. And I'll promise, if you like, to go to my bed immediately."

"I don't care. I won't have you do it."

"But you don't in the least realize . . ."

"Don't I?" she cried indignantly, dropping her hands from her face. "I do realize! If my staying is driving you from your own house, I won't stop a minute after you. I should rather sleep in a haystack. I should rather stay up all night."

She looked appealing for a little. She bit her lip, for tears were again coming.

"Oh, I wish that I had never done it, for I see it's no use," she said.

She heard him protest and scrape back his chair. She forlornly decided that he was abandoning a vexatious situation. He came round the table. He said:

"Will you look at me, please?" in a tone of suppressed agitation.

She looked at him. He concluded:

"I want you to marry me."

She then looked at him more closely than ever. She grew angry.

"You don't know what you're saying!" she cried. "I am not a girl who stands a thing like this!" A thought struck her. "Or perhaps you have got to ask me because you have—what do you call it?—compromised me? Oh, why . . .? What have I done that you should try to make free with me?"



"Heaven forbid!" he fervently interrupted. She listened, compelled by his sincerity. "Heaven forbid I should dream of such a thing—for I love you. I've honestly loved you from the moment I saw you. You're . . . wonderful. Most unfortunately, I believe that you are compromised, as you call it. So I've said now what in any case I should have said in a few weeks. Then I should have come to you in the usual way. Now I am forced to come to you, with everything against me that could be. But there's no question of insult in wanting you to be my wife."

He paused. She contemplated the red carpet. Mirth and indignation were struggling for the mastery of her heart. Mirth conquered. Forgetting her troubles, she laughed.

"I say, don't laugh," he remonstrated.

She could not stop, however.

"Oh, Mr. Macaig," she managed to say, "it's too funny! I mean, how long have we known one another? Just a few hours. And then you talk like this! See," she earnestly went on, "I'm sorry if I've been at all unkind. I'm sorry if I've put this into your head. It's very kind of you to—to ask me to be your wife. But you don't

know anything about me. We are almost strangers."

"You are not a stranger. Not a bit. I've known you only for hours. But your father has had business with my firm, and my father knows him very well." He paused and intently looked at her. "Shall I tell you when I first saw you?"

"Yesterday," she put in quickly.

His nostrils quivered, as though in delicate scorn of a stupid world.

"Not yesterday," he corrected her. "Long before that."

He drew a chair from the table and sat down. The house had grown still. The moonless night, beyond the curtained windows, was oppressively significant. The gas was hissing. The obtrusiveness of a sound, so trivial in itself, emphasized the quiet of the house. Margaret's head began to spin . . . not unpleasantly . . . and she felt that nothing was real but the man before her and herself.

"I saw you in my dreams," he began. "Wait a minute! Please don't interrupt! I'm not talking poetically, I assure you." His eyes grew speculative. "Every boy is a lover. I know it's a convention that boys do

not think of love. But in my experience, it's a subject that perpetually entrances them. Some of them are rather tentative. But, in their solitary moments, they all build up an ideal feminine personality, endowed with the gift of sympathy, of comprehending when all else fails them. Few boys are alone. They are either with their companions on the football field or with their provokingly elusive ideal." He paused. "They play with their ideal. They make absurd love to their ideal. They marry their ideal—as they develop, of course. And with each episode they wake up to their daily lives. They go back, for a spell, to their companions. They pretend that love is nothing, or nothing but a vulgar joke. But they are startled at the sight of every girl they meet. For they are secretly wondering, don't you see, if here is their ideal incarnate. Fathers would understand their sons, if they would only keep this in mind . . . ." He broke off with old-fashioned earnestness: "I assure you, a boy suffers unspeakably—terribly—in the process of becoming a man."

He again paused.

"I made a very ordinary boy, you know. I got through the usual difficulties somehow. And, like the others, I had my ideal. But

there was just this : my ideal was most extraordinarily real. I could always see her eyes, if you follow me. And then, as I grew older, I could see her smile and the expression of the whole face. It was rather curious. And I'll take my oath, really, there isn't any question ! I'm prepared to swear that you and my ideal are one and the same person." He hurried on : " Wait a minute. Perhaps you'll think I'm talking poetically again or that I'm making a mistake ; that I've mixed up my ideal with you, because I've been in your company for a matter of twenty-four hours. Well, about a week ago, in Dublin, I came across your photograph in a paper. I think you had been helping at a bazaar. The moment I looked at that photograph, I knew it was the girl I had imagined when I was a boy at school."

He stopped diffidently. To Margaret's eyes, his dark face slowly grew darker—and so attractive that she could not bear to look away. The interest of his tale had held her. She had again sat down. She lowered her eyes with an effort, stretched out her hand, began to finger her empty coffee-cup which still remained on the table. She had now no desire to laugh—as she groped for gentle

words, in which to frame her refusal. Refusal it must be, she was certain. Her refusal resembled a regret.

"You have forgotten I am a Catholic."

He appreciated the difficulty.

"And I am not. I know. But I fully intend to become one." He hesitated. "I assure you," he earnestly went on, "I'm not volunteering to take this step merely to suit myself to your views. The Catholic Church has attracted me for years. And I decided, before I met you, that its claims were justified."

She made no sign beyond an appraising glance. She inwardly approved him for his decision, which, she thought, was what she might have expected. A practical institution like the Catholic Church was bound to appeal to a man as practical as he. She was suddenly startled by an impulse to behave as if she were helpless. Absurd, she thought,—as she could well look after herself. . . .

He was once more pleading his cause, but she did not follow what he said. She was appreciating the passion of his expression. She shyly decided that "he was a dear," and that he was more handsome than she had hitherto thought. She remembered, too, with apparent inconsequence, the prayer she



had uttered on the eve of her visit to his office. Prayer was a practical method for producing a practical result. She further remembered that she had invoked St. Margaret of Scotland. A Scotsman of sympathetic views was ardently asking her in marriage. A logical mind would hesitate before deciding that there was not significance in this.

Doubts and surmises slipped from her as the shell of the chrysalis slips from the butterfly. They had perhaps served their purpose—like the chrysalis. They had perhaps screened the exquisite discovery of which she was now in possession. She knew that Macaig was no man ; he was a god, perfect and desirable in mind and body. She knew that she loved him. Her eyes grew starry and very tender as she contemplated his manifest divinity. She wanted to lie down while he trampled on her worthless self. She could have wept at the beauty of her discovery.

“ Dear,” he said. She was pleasantly tortured.

“ Won’t you answer me ? ”

She did not answer. She wondered why. She upbraided herself for the pain she was causing him.

“ Won’t you answer me ? ” he repeated,

taking her hand. "You must answer me. You must answer me."

"I . . . don't know," she said timidly. He fascinated her. "Anyway I want you to kiss me . . ."



## PART II

### I

MACAIG was to be received into the Church on the seventeenth of April. Catholic dogmas had for long interested him. But a systematic re-examination was necessary before he finally accepted them. He placed himself in the hands of Father Clithero, a Jesuit attached to the Glasgow mission. Macaig's wedding was fixed for the morning after his reception. It would take place in St. Peter's Church, Partick. Margaret was spending in St. Peter's parish the month succeeding her engagement. She had abandoned her intention of returning to her father, for she felt that he would never understand her conduct. She perceived clearly if sadly that she was cut off from him until her marriage. No one, she admitted, could be expected to understand; no one, that is, who had missed those peculiar moments in Macaig's dining-room, when an acquaintanceship of years had been perfectly compressed

into a bewildering half-hour. She wrote to her father that she was to marry Macaig, but she did not send her address.

Her action left her in a position galling to her pride. She had no money and was therefore dependent on her lover. She decided to mitigate her humiliation by finding economical rooms, but she could not consult her lover, who would have laughed at her scruples. The Sisters of Notre Dame had a convent in the west of Glasgow. Nuns of their Order had educated her. She went to their convent on the morning after her engagement. Their welcome was warm. They made her their guest till she married. Her difficulty was thus solved. She had doubts regarding her behaviour towards her father, but she calmed them by planning to spend her honeymoon in Ireland.

Her plan was spoilt. Macaig's father was in Portsmouth. Macaig was unable to leave his business for a day. It was impossible to expect a honeymoon. It was also impossible to furnish a house. Time was too short. Macaig's aunt, a rigid Presbyterian, shocked by her nephew's conversion, refused to remain in the Bearsden house if her nephew introduced his wife. She looked upon Margaret as an



emissary of Rome, a female Jesuit, who was luring Macaig to perdition. A furnished flat, in the west of Renfrew Street, was taken. It was near the Jesuit Church. Macaig, who liked Father Clithero, was glad to think that he would live in the latter's parish.

Margaret, also, liked Father Clithero. He was a thin ascetic. He resembled the popular statues of St. Ignatius. He had that dazzling attractiveness so characteristic of Lancashire. His manner was winning, his smile a friendly one that put her at her ease. He was as simple as a saint and as wise. His straightforward method of grappling with a problem particularly appealed to her temperament. He was one of those scrupulously clean-minded men who are able to share in a grief or a joy, who have acquired the art of charity by a process of self-abnegation. His age was uncertain.

She was overtaken by a fit of alarm on the eve of her marriage. Her experience was of those which afflict everybody and defy analysis. They breed the impulses on which steamboat passages are at the last moment forfeited; careers abandoned, when they are leading to success; marriages broken off when the ring is already bought. A conviction settled in her heart that calamity was impending.

She found herself believing that the marriage was bound to be marred by some unforeseen disaster. An unconscious egotism is at the root of such experiences. They are due to the notion that a matter, important to ourselves, is important to the world at large.

She was walking in the convent garden when the alarm came to her. The April evenings were grudgingly lengthening. The garden was sheltered by a high wall. She was wise enough not to grapple with her mood but to escape it. She remembered Father Clithero, determined to see him, hurried to her room, pressed on her hat in a fever of haste. A tram took her to the point in Sauchiehall Street that was nearest the Jesuit College. The short twilight was by this time over. The great smoke-ridden city, with its scurrying crowds, unending roar, shuttered shops, seemed muffled. The brilliant trams were startling against the dusky background of a Sauchiehall Street relentlessly deprived of its lights. She slowly penetrated a wide precipitous street. Her steps broke the repose, as sad, meditative, and indifferent as that of an eastern city, in which Garnethill wraps itself. The tumbled roofs of the flats and sheds, above which she was rising, loomed greyly in the darkness.

She rang thrice at the door of the College. A dull Belgian boy, girded with a dirty apron, at last opened to her. She asked if "Father Clithero could be seen just now." He wearily took her across an asphalt hall into a small parlour which in its essentials resembled the one she had visited with her father in Dublin. She sat at the narrow table as the boy left her. She tried to compose herself into an outward tranquillity. She was still attempting this when Father Clithero, heralded by a light step, entered smartly.

She rose. He smiled reassuringly and stretched out his hand in welcome.

"I *am* glad to see you! But sit down! Sit down!" She murmured an apology. "Not a bit of it. You aren't disturbing me in the least. I was only making some notes in the library."

"To-morrow—I was feeling so strange . . ."

She sat down. She smiled appealingly. "So I thought I might come to you . . ."

"Um. That's right," he said heartily. He went on with a simple friendliness that was persuasive: "Now, you know you may come to me whenever you like. I've told you that, haven't I? I shall be so pleased, if I can help you at all. You know that, don't you?"

He drew out a chair, seated himself, adjusted his Spanish gown. "*Now*, what's the matter?" he concluded, with a sudden display of concentration.

"Father, I'm frightened," she began. "I have never been like this before. So I don't know what's the matter, you see. I've told you what brought about this marriage, and all my reason has so far approved of the step. I have never been happy in Ireland. But I now feel less happy, when I remember that I'm cutting myself off from Ireland for ever. And instinct, or something, rises up and looks at me sadly, as if I were false in what I do."

He waited till he was sure that she had finished. He then expressed himself in a series of rapid little nods of comprehension.

"Well, now,"—by the authority with which he said the words, he at once took command of the situation—"I advise you, pay no attention to that. The fact is, sentimental associations often seem stronger than the truth. You are quite justified in marrying Charlie, if you like. And you can be a good Catholic—it doesn't matter where you have to live. You aren't bound to Ireland because you happen to be a Catholic. No country has

a right to monopolize the Church like that."

She replied, after considering his remarks :

"I think I am frightened of giving. It's the strangest feeling! You want for days to give him everything you have. And then, when the day comes you feel that too much is asked, and that you must escape at once, before it is too late, do you see? And sometimes I feel like a child going to a picnic, happy, you know. And at other times, I feel as though I were years older than he, and sadder and wiser. And I'm not older, and it's very silly and annoying. I never used to feel like this. I don't understand it."

"You mustn't give way to those sort of feelings," he began.

"They're not wrong?"

"Oh! 'They're very natural, I think." He flashed a smile at her. "But," he seriously went on, "I shouldn't advise you to dwell on them. Just remember that there isn't anything unusual in what you experience. Just say to yourself: "Well, I love Charlie, so whatever I feel, I shall make up my mind to trust him. Put your will into it, never mind your emotions. And you'll find, won't you, that things will straighten out presently? And you'll find,



I think, that you're going to be downright happy ! I hope so."

He allowed time for his words to take effect. His energy and decision had carried her with him. She now regarded her panic as though it were that of a stranger. He went on with an embarrassed laugh :

" *Now*, are we feeling ourselves again ? Charlie and I are great friends already, you know. You couldn't have a better husband."

" Yes. I'm very lucky. I see that. For where would I have found a practical man among my father's friends ? "

He became apprehensive. His expression was almost guilty. He studied her anxiously. His head trembled gently.

" You might have found one. Remember what you evidently imply in your own case. Truly practical people are very often best found in romantic surroundings, I believe." He added in a tone of meaning : " Now, don't forget that. Don't."

She rose.

" I'll never forget what you've done for me, father. And I wish you could talk to me longer. But the convent will be locked at ten. And I think I ought to go to bed, before I have time to get upset again."

He did not try to keep her. His spirits had left him. He appeared shaken and concerned. He stood up slowly. His action was unconscious, a mere compliance with the conventions. He reluctantly went to the door and laid his hand upon the knob.

He turned abruptly.

"I truly wish—" he began. Changing his mind, he opened the door and drew back to allow her to pass. "I shan't forget to pray for you," he concluded. "And I daresay you will be very happy."

## II

Margaret awakened in her Renfrew Street flat, a month later, and became aware of the morning sights and sounds which were actually familiar, despite the time she had experienced them. She lingered for a little with the memory of her dreams, already remote and uncertain. She cautiously sat up.

Her room, viewed from the bed in the lights which penetrated the green blind, gave her an impression of disorder, a pleasant disorder which did not reproach but emphasized the advantages of the room. The colour-note was pink. A pink paper was sprigged with green. There were long pink curtains and pink felt upon the floor. The suite was of dark mahogany carved in a mediaeval pattern. A dressing-table on her left cut off the angle of the window. A pedestal on her right bore a pink-shaded electric lamp. A nest-fire was still smouldering at the other end of the room. The door of her husband's dressing-room was beside it. The dressing-room window was at

the back of the building, facing Sauchiehall Street.

The bedroom window was open at the top, so Margaret could hear the traffic. The trams, heralded by the moan of their trolleys, were by this time frequent. The vans and milk-carts, busy with their early delivery, clattered as they crossed the cobbles in which the tram lines were set. A lorry, laden with coals, was lumbering in St. George's Road. The driver bellowed like a great spirit, helpless and wandering, blindly seeking to express itself. The piercing whistle of an engine tore through the other sounds and temporarily rendered them insignificant.

Life was proper and reassuring, thought Margaret. She turned upon her left elbow. Throwing back her braided hair with the impatient toss of a schoolgirl, she contemplated her sleeping husband. Her expression was mingled of rapture and devotion. His intellectual face, peaceful as he slept, was entirely at her disposal, for he lay upon his back. His breast, under the white silk jacket over which he had doubled his arm, was steadily rising and falling. The faces of the dead and of the sleeping are always inscrutable, but she told herself, with a thrill, that his mind was

as an open book to her. She remembered for the hundredth time that the frankness of their intercourse was perfect.

She sighed with the ecstasy of the situation. Tearing her eyes from the object of their devotion she slipped to the floor as noiselessly as possible, pushed her feet into worsted slippers, tiptoed to the window about the end of the dressing-table, peeped round the blind at the morning. An opaque sun was shining. In harmony with that pearly sunlight, she softly released the blind, withdrew into the room, glanced at the occupant of the bed. She then unfastened her long gown and escaped it entirely, with a twist of her white arms. Venus was made anachronous by a pair of red slippers. She was wrapped but a minute later in a fleecy bath-gown and was scurrying to her bath.

She closed the door upon her return, and stood meditatively, her head a little to the side, her brow wrinkled, as if she were debating a question which had to be settled. It was now clear that the girl who had darted to Scotland had undergone considerable changes. Knowledge had deepened her eyes. Their reproach was gone. The curves of her face were richer and more expressive. She suddenly came to a decision. Approaching the bed,



she indulged herself, for the last time that morning, with the precious spectacle of her sleeping husband, who was lying as she had left him. She smiled at the quaint thought of the consternation that would be his, if, while he slept, she were to desert him. The moment was a serious one, however. Drawing a breath, she bent her head and pressed her lips to her husband's. She kept them there till his eyes flickered and opened.

A second, devoid of recognition, is bound to succeed an awakening. The second passed. His eyes lit. He returned her kiss with passion. Laughing happily, she presently evaded him. Straightened herself. Sat upon the edge of the bed. Slipped her hand into his, with a gesture of confidence. He watched her so closely that her face reddened. She asked him :

“What are you staring at me for?”

“For what I can get,” he replied, without lowering his eyes.

She reproved him with a squeeze of her hand.

He presently struggled to a sitting position and deliberately yawned, concluding the process by catching her eye, drawing down his lips, and smiling such a droll, intimate little smile that she could only laugh. He asked :

“What sort of a morning is it, dear?”

"The sun is shining."

He considered this information. He said with in consequence :

"I think I love you more than ever."

She did not reply. He presently withdrew his hand and settled himself in his new position. He pulled up a pillow and arranged it at the back of his head.

"Will you give me a cigarette ? "

She rose willingly and disappeared into the dressing-room. On his dressing-table a leather cigarette-case was lying. She picked it up, lightly pressed it to be sure that it was not empty, and was back in a few seconds. She loved these acts of service. A matchbox was on her dressing-table. With a nonchalance (that was overdone), she lit the cigarette, which was by this time between his lips. She avoided his eyes lest he might notice her confusion. The scent of tobacco in her room still occasioned her joy and a delightful feeling of guilt.

She pulled the blind, threw up the lower sash, heard him remark ruefully :

"Jove, what a day ! And the afternoon must be given to business ! "

She then remembered that, Saturday though it was, he had business in Greenock which

necessitated his leaving by the four-three train from St. Enoch's.

"Never mind," she consoled him. "If you ask me to tea, I will see you off at the station."

Readjusting her warm bath-gown, she returned to the bed. - Sitting in her old position she again contemplated her husband, dreamily watching the corkscrew of blue smoke which threaded from his cigarette. She gently wondered at his capacity for enjoyment, at the intense pleasure he so obviously derived from the first cigarette of the day. She dropped her eyes and began to fret the selvage of the counterpane between her finger and thumb.

"Charlie," she said, in a serious tone which she had not hitherto used.

He at once grew attentive, moulding his mood to hers with a thoroughness which reassured her.

She raised her eyes.

"Do you think I should write a letter to father?"

He threw back his head as though he were capturing a bird's-eye view of the events which had led to the marriage.

"Yes. I don't know why not."

"You see," she went on, averting her eyes,

"I don't think he'll understand. I haven't spoken to you before. That was silly of me. Of course I ought to. I see that. It will look to him as if we had just eloped in the ordinary way. Perhaps arranged it beforehand. In that case, he'll think I've been deceiving him in my heart when I left him to come to you about the letter. He will not know that I went to Scotland, only"—her voice sank to a whisper—"only to try and save him."

She paused.

"You know, I never wrote to him properly. Not properly. I—I lost courage . . . I wrote to him to say that I was going to marry you. But I did not send the address. I hate myself. I was afraid, then, that something would keep me from having you. And when we were really married I sent him a telegram—telegrams are easier than letters—to say that I was married that morning. I gave him this address and asked him to visit us."

"But I wrote to him, of course."

"What! You wrote to him? Why? I don't understand this. When? What did you say?"

He pulled at his cigarette and deliberately expelled a grey cloud.

"I think," she began, "you might be

careful where you puff your smoke—no, no, forgive me! I—I don't know why I said that. I don't! . . . But this sudden surprise has upset me. Tell me quickly what you said to him."

He stretched over the bed. He unobtrusively pressed out his cigarette in the hollow of a china candlestick which was standing beside the lamp.

"I told him about my income—you know, I couldn't possibly avoid it—and that he could safely trust you in my hands. I gave him my address and said that I refused to be a party to a marriage without his consent. I told him, too, that I fully sympathized with his standpoint."

"You said that?" cried Margaret indignantly. "Well, I never thought you were such a hypocrite—"

She broke off in secret consternation at the sound of the word which had escaped her. Its significance was lost upon him, for he started, as she spoke, drawing up his knees and jerking forward his head.

"I say!" he exclaimed in a scandalized whisper, "I never posted that letter!"

He relapsed upon his pillow.

"Oh! But that—that's abominable of me!



I remember writing it at the office the day after we became engaged. I forgot his address. And before I could turn it up, some one came in to see me, so I shoved the letter in a drawer. I've never remembered it since. All this time I've been wondering why he wouldn't reply to me! Good heavens! I can imagine what he'll be saying and thinking! Of course you must write to him at once!"

"I'll write to him this afternoon after I've seen you off," she agreed in a small voice.

She was guarding both her mind and her tongue. She was quivering from the fright she had received in glimpsing a self of which she had hitherto been unconscious.

"Will you have another cigarette?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not. I must get up. And anyway I don't deserve one."

He entered his dressing-room, while she remained on the empty bed. Her expression was one of mistrust. She was still affected by the aftermath of that storm-in-a-teacup which had unexpectedly, if lightly, disturbed her. "That wasn't what I expected of him," she found herself murmuring sadly. There was more in her trouble than that. She could as

honestly have said that it was not what she would have expected of herself.

They lingered later in the day over their luncheon-table. Two o'clock had struck before he managed to get home—his fate was that of many on a Saturday—and it was now a quarter to three. She had forgotten the little storm which had ruffled her awakening. She was once more living blissfully. She watched her husband, who was staring dreamily in front of him. She smiled her approval.

"What are you thinking of?" she softly asked.

"You," he said abruptly.

He pushed back his chair and rose.

He came round the table and, bending deliberately, kissed the side of her throat.

She stood up with decision.

"We must start for the station," she declared.

### III

It was the eve of Whit Sunday. It occurred to Margaret, as they waited for an east-bound tram, that the traffic was influenced by the festival. The streets were unusually animated, allowing for the fact that it was Saturday afternoon. A yellow tram, on to the covered top of which they climbed, bore them along Sauchiehall Street to the accompaniment of a clanging bell. Her impression was confirmed. The tram was crowded with men who, judging by their bags and suit-cases, were bent upon a week-end holiday. She caught sight of the Jesuit Church, as they passed the foot of Rose Street. She recollected that there was Benediction at eight o'clock that evening, that her husband and she had arranged to be present together. Turning to him quickly, she asked :

“ I suppose you'll not be back in time for Benediction ? ”

He considered.

"Oh, yes, I really don't know why I shouldn't be back in time. I've only to see one man in Greenock. He's near the station, and he'll take up about fifteen minutes."

"I'm glad of that." A thought struck her. "Which Mass will you be going to to-morrow?"

A clatter of a van deadened most of his answer, but she caught the final words:

"At ten."

They left the tram at Argyle Street. Crossing to the opposite pavement they threaded their way eastwards through the clustering mob. This mob characterizes the thoroughfare and leads the countryman to believe that a riot is just going to begin. Beyond the congested entry to St. Enoch's Square they came upon the plate-glass windows of the Forum Warehouse. It is a Scottish Harrods' where a range of articles can be bought, and where the inevitable tea-lounge occupies a prominent position. Lunch had been late. It was early for tea. But Margaret had planned to have tea with her husband, and an arrangement of the sort still seemed a sacramental. She

preceded him through double doors into an atmosphere of gloves and laces and hosiery. A fast lift was soon bearing them to the tea-lounge.

There was nothing phenomenal about the lounge despite the extravagant advertisements which had marked its beginnings. It was the usual barn, crowded with small tables. There is this to be said for such tea-rooms. They are a relief from the travesties upon Japan which are encountered in every town. The Forum tea-lounge was carpeted softly and decorated very conventionally. There were no kimono-clad geishas, with Japanese fans in their hair—and Gallowgate tongues in their mouths.

Service was given by girls dressed as table-maids. These passed from table to table at their own pace. The room was half empty. They swayed in unconscious time with the band which occupied a low dais at an end of the long room. An alcove was at the opposite end. It contained a round three-legged table and two wide padded chairs. To this alcove Margaret led the way.

She poured the tea. They made their



selection from the not very tempting cakes which a paternal government allowed. They leant back in their chairs—for neither was in a hurry to eat. The bandsmen (who had been resting) now re-assembled on the daïs. A minute later, at a signal from the leader, they glided into the *Blue Danube Waltz*, into those heart-searching strains which are bound up with poignant memories in the minds of so many. She bent forward, as she caught the rhythm of the melody. She said to her husband :

“ Oh, I love that waltz ! Don't you ? ”

He slowly nodded. She could not be certain if he had heard her question. He was perhaps keeping time to the music.

Raising her eyes, she saw a youthful couple who had risen to go. The squire was about eighteen, a dark slender boy. His damsel was a schoolgirl, fair and wide-eyed, budding into sweet maturity. Margaret touched her husband's hand, for she was glad of an excuse to break his reverie. She invited him to look at the couple. He turned ; glanced at them unobtrusively ; parted his lips in an interested smile, faint and pitying.

"Eighteen," he said dryly.

From the pinnacle of her one-and-twenty years Margaret nodded condescendingly.

"Yet he doesn't seem awfully happy," her husband went on. "And eighteen! It should be a happy age."

"Oh.- Look, look!" she whispered with a suppressed laugh. She assumed the gravity of a matron of forty. "A boy like that! Well, he ought to be properly ashamed of himself. It would serve him right if he was exposed. There! He's gone round behind that pillar. I wish I could follow and see!"

She had in fact witnessed one of those lightning comedies with which the observant are occasionally rewarded in tea-rooms, stations, public places. A waitress had handed the boy his bill, to receive which he had been lingering behind his companion. It was then that the comedy occurred. - He had glanced at his receding companion. He had drawn from his pocket a few coins and, panic-stricken, had compared their total with that of the bill. He had darted to his table, after a furtive glance, and with an air of relief had abstracted the

threepence which he had previously put for the waitress . . .

"I wish I could follow and see!" Margaret repeated.

Her husband smiled and looked down.

"I wish I knew him. I shouldn't have objected to lending that boy some money." He hesitated. "I was once in the same boat."

He went on simply:

"I was seventeen at the time, and we were staying at Lundin Links for the summer holidays. And one day, while I was out with my father, a girl I had met at tennis invited me to dinner. Like an ass, of course, I accepted, and discovered, when it was too late, that she was staying with her brother in a big hotel, where everybody dressed in the evening. I had just left school, and I hadn't had time to attain to my first dress-suit."

"And what did you do?"

He glanced at her quickly.

"Well. Of course I couldn't go, or at least I thought so at the time. I'm afraid I at once began to spin her a yarn. The usual thing. Another engagement that I'd suddenly remembered."

“And did the girl believe you?”

His lip curled in reminiscent contempt.

“She hadn’t a chance to believe me. My father reminded me in a loud voice that in any case I had no clothes.”

Margaret was quick to divine the bitterness underlying his bald statement.

“You weren’t happy as a boy?”

He considered this mistrustfully.

“It depends upon what you call happy.” He fleetingly smiled in the intimate way that was his. “I don’t want you to think of me, you know, as the hero of an Ibsen play. I was quite an ordinary boy, remember. For three quarters of the time I didn’t practise introspection. But at the back of my brain I couldn’t help feeling that I was missing a great opportunity. I never got rid of that wretched feeling until I came across you.”

She rewarded him with an adoring glance. He went on:

“But it seems such an awful time since I was a boy . . . You know, I haven’t the slightest appreciation of music, I’m afraid—but that thing they’re playing certainly brings it back. It was my mother’s favourite waltz,

and she used to play it so often that I couldn't help learning it. In fact, I used to be tired of it."

"You were quite young when she died, weren't you?"

He nodded and replied shortly:

"I was twelve."

He caught sight of his cooling cup of tea. Raising it quickly, he poured the contents down his throat as though he were performing a duty.

"Another cup?" she suggested.

He shook his head. Cutting a small cake into four pieces he rapidly consumed two of them. She sipped at her cup and leant back comfortably.

"Tell me about yourself," she said softly.

"Eh?" He laid down the third piece of cake which he was then carrying to his mouth. "Oh, but I don't think there's much to tell, for my school days were quite uneventful. I was at school in Crieff—Morrison's Academy. If you should happen to write my biography, you can safely say that I was 'properly submissive to lawful authority,' whenever I couldn't help myself. But please don't say,



I beg you, that I 'showed a marked desire to enter my father's business.' For I didn't."

Her eyes widened.

"Then why did you enter it?"

He made a wry face, grew serious, seemed on the point of opening his heart. The habit of years was perhaps too strong for him, for he passed the matter as a joke.

"Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor," he provoked her. He concluded soberly: "One has to do something, you know."

He paused with his lips parted in a dubious smile. The waltz ended as he thus sat, and his reverie was broken. She found she was glad that the waltz had ended, and in an idle spirit began to seek the reason. She realized with shame that she was jealous of the memories which it roused in her husband, in which she had no share.

"We lived at Giffnock in those days," he began, leaving her to infer that he was speaking of the days of his boyhood. "In Clarewood Drive, off the Kilmarnock Road. One of those self-contained, pretentious villas which try to look Jacobean by hiding themselves among trees. There were my father, mother, my

brother, who's in Palestine just now, and myself, and two servants and a nurse. There weren't any cars out there, but I have an extraordinarily vivid impression of my father leaving every morning for his office.

"When it wasn't raining the nurse used to take my brother and myself for a walk. I am informed that I usually wore a sailor-suit. Sometimes she would take us to the quarries, and we would stand on the edge and look down upon a dozen mysterious activities. I liked that. When it was raining some other kiddies, children of business-men like my father, would come in the afternoon to play. We always played at managing offices of our own."

He paused to look at his watch.

"Please go on!" she pleaded.

She was not attending to the significance of his words. She was studying his expression and secretly revelling in the pleasure derived from the process of receiving a confidence.

He smiled at her eagerness.

"It isn't very exciting, is it?" He sighed. "Well. My mother died when I was twelve, as you know, and soon afterwards my aunt came to look after the house. Up till then

my brother and I had been taught first by a governess and then at a private day-school. But almost at once we were sent to Morrison's, though I don't think I cared for it much. But perhaps I should have been lonely anywhere. And at any rate, one gets used to things."

"Charlie," she put in softly, "you have the loveliest eyes!"

He started. He seemed distressed by the interruption.

"And won't you have some more tea?" she went on.

He shook his head impatiently, and she viewed his impatience with surprise. There are times when domesticity frets a man like a hair-shirt.

"One has to get used to things," he said suddenly. "Would you believe it, I was launched upon my present nautical career before I had been at school a month? They wanted a chart—for a wall—of the naval flags of the world, and the drawing-master was asked for suggestions. By way of an amusing experiment he decided to get one of his class to do it. Sketch it, colour it, and everything. He naturally presumed that I would be

interested in ships, since my father was a shipowner. So I was chosen for the job."

He smiled at his plate reminiscently, but gradually became serious. His eyes grew thoughtful. His sensitive lips quivered, as though he were suffering a moment of delicate pain.

"That was the way of it," he murmured. He then deliberately ate the two remaining portions of his cake.

"How a shipowner was made," he added. Margaret found it impossible to decide upon the tone in which he said this.

He again looked at his watch.

"I say, we must go!"

He precipitately rose; nodded to a passing waitress; showed impatience while she made out his bill in a practised scrawl. The room was steadily filling. The band, as if to celebrate the fact, triumphantly began a selection from *The Bing Boys*.

"That's not the *Blue Danube Waltz*," he naïvely informed Margaret in an aside. She laughed at him.

Conversation was dropped by mutual consent. It was ten minutes to four. They had to hurry

to reach the station in time. She gravely superintended the taking of his ticket; accompanied him into the cavern of a station, vaulted with glass and oddly reminiscent of St. Pancras; anticipated his discovery of the long string of chocolate-coloured carriages, the sides of which curved outwards, like the staves of a barrel. She held him affectionately with her eyes, as he opened the door of a crowded smoker.

"You'll not forget Benediction?" she reminded him.

"I shan't forget."

She waited. The tail of the van disappeared as the train curved in order to cross the river. She sighed before she was aware; she wondered why. It was nonsense, she told herself, that a sensible young woman should behave like a schoolgirl, because her husband had disappeared for a few hours on business which had to be done. Her state of mind was inevitable. There is no escape from the significance of a departure, however trivial.

She recovered her serenity on reaching St. Enøch's Square. She was as practical as a rationalist by the time she had boarded a



blue tram in Argyle Street. She alighted at Charing Cross. She lingered, forcing herself to be amused by the distracted crowds who were seeking enjoyment with an energy that rendered it impossible. She would have lingered longer, but she remembered that she must write to her father.

She therefore returned to the flat where, she knew, an excellent cook would now be preparing dinner. A wind was rising. There was a raw touch in the air. She further knew that a parlourmaid, equally excellent, would have kindled a fire in the drawing-room. She fitted her check in the patent lock, opened the door, pictured the comfort that awaited her. She found a new overcoat deposited on the hall-table.

She hurried to the drawing-room. A man was by the window. She rubbed her eyes at the sight of him. She could not believe their evidence. He was entertaining himself with the not attractive outlook, the sombre masonry at the other side of Renfrew Street. He turned as the door opened. She found herself facing her father.

#### IV

She waited twenty seconds while her mind struggled with the phenomenon which confronted it. She betrayed her bewilderment only by her eyes. Her lips had arranged themselves neatly as if she were on the point of pronouncing the word *but*.

“ But . . . ”

She might thus have begun a protest, an objection feebly hurled against the scheme of things, hitherto orderly now chaotic. She grew accustomed to her father's presence. She excitedly threw herself in his arms.

“ I'm so glad—glad,” she said, as her arms went round his neck.

He presently kissed her forehead. He then gently disengaged himself and stood back. She instinctively put up a hand to her tilted hat.

“ I can't believe . . . ”

Her eyes wavered from his face as though she were seeking reassurance from her matter-of-fact surroundings. The room was the smallest in the flat, but it was her own. She loved it as well as she could love a room, the furniture of which was rented. It was carpeted in blue, decorated in blue and white. The suite was of a quaint spindle-legged design, with small blue cushions surrounded by a wide margin of pale oak. She never entered the room without being pleasantly reminded of her old school, where blue was the dress of the pupils.

She started and again looked at her father as though she expected that he might have disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

"Yes," she said wonderingly. She pulled herself together. "You are staying here, in Glasgow?"

"At the Central Station Hotel."

"And you have just arrived?"

"Directly by boat from the North Wall to Greenock. From that point I travelled by rail."

She vaguely felt that there was an elusive coincidence in the fact that he had come from

the town to which her husband had gone. She grew still more accustomed to his presence. His brilliant eyes, his beard, unnaturally black, his voice, perfectly controlled—the sensations they produced were so familiar that she found herself slipping into the past. She was ready to believe that her marriage was a dream and that she was chatting in the Dublin mansion. She again glanced about her. She was again awakened by her modern surroundings.

“Why have you come?” she asked.

“To see you.”

She became her normal self.

“Won’t you sit down, father?”

“Did your husband come in with you?”

She shook her head.

“Is he coming?”

“Yes.”

“Then—No. I shall not sit down, I think, till he comes.”

“Have you been standing all this while?” she cried.

He gravely nodded.

“But why?”

“I prefer not to sit down in the house of—perhaps—my enemy.”

He said those last two words so unostentatiously, so reluctantly, that she could not be as angry as she otherwise would have been.

"Charlie's not your enemy!" she told him indignantly.

"Perhaps not, perhaps not." He courteously agreed with her. He went on sadly: "Yet one judges, you know, by results, not by professions of faith."

"He wrote you a nice letter. Only he forgot to post it. And I was to write to you to-day—" She checked herself. "Please sit down," she concluded.

She noticed his fleeting smile, melancholy and ironic, with which she was so familiar.

"Thank you. But no. I'm afraid," he explained, "you must make allowances for me. I am still quixotic enough to act according to those principles which you seem to have abandoned temporarily."

"Do you mean to condemn me?"

"God forbid!" He then said in a tone that was tense with emotion: "My daughter! My little daughter!" He controlled himself. "I assure you," he finished, "I have



not come to condemn you, anything but that."

She too controlled herself after a moment of distress. She repeated:

"Father, I ask you to sit down."

He scarcely appeared to have heard her.

"See," she went on. "If you feel as you say, I understand. But this is my room, my very own. Charlie gave it to me. He said: 'It is as much yours as if we were not married, as if you were renting it at your own expense.' Surely you will sit down in my room?"

He deliberately stretched out a hand and laid it on one of the chairs. He was about to yield with dignity, but his dignity was spoilt. He stumbled, threw back his head, sank upon the chair, gripped its edge, panted for breath.

"Father! You're ill!" she cried.

"Nothing," he assured her. "A glass of water." He went on in a steadier voice, in which, however, there was a disturbing note of urgency: "Just a glass of water, Margaret! I'm thirsty and . . ."

No woman could have failed to divine that missing word.

"Hungry!" she cried, in an almost re-criminative tone. Like most housewives, she was shocked by the idea of hunger. "Father! When did you eat last?" He hesitated. "Ah, but you must tell me? When did you eat last?"

"I forget. Last night, I think. The boat was delayed, and at the hotel I was too anxious."

"Sit perfectly still!"

Lingering only to make sure that he was not meditating disobedience, she rushed from the room. She broke into her bright kitchen, upon her astonished servants who were still loitering over a slattern tea. The cook, a capable middle-aged woman with a wrinkled face and a virtuous expression remained severely unconscious of her mistress's advent. The parlourmaid, a tall anæmic girl, nervously rose, moistening her colourless lips.

"A—a Count Kettle," she began, in a pretty artificial voice. "But perhaps you've seen . . . ?"

"My father," assented Margaret.

She could not but perceive the sensation her remark created. She had no time to allay it. Snatching an iron tray, she covered it with a lace tea-cloth. Snatching the servant's teapot, which was half full, she placed it upon the tray and quickly reinforced it with a cup, a saucer, and a plate from the small pantry. The only provisions she could find were a plate of stale scones and a mould of green jelly, probably prepared as a sweet for that evening's dinner. She took her discoveries to the tray, together with milk, a sugar-basin, a couple of spoons, a knife. She disappeared with her incongruous meal, as impetuously as she had come.

She found her father as she had left him. He was still sitting in a huddled attitude. Casting him a glance of concern, she placed the tray on a chair beside him. Struck with a brighter idea, she transferred it to a small card-table which she drew within his reach. She stood considering him. Her eyes were bright with anxiety but there was nothing more she could do. He began to eat in a helpless way that was pathetic.

She had time to study him as he ate. She now saw that his complexion, naturally pale,

was paler than usual. She inwardly reproached herself for hitherto failing to notice his weakness. It was less than two months since she had seen him, but he seemed thinner and feebler. She fancied, too, that he was a prey to some deep-seated mental agitation. Observing at the same minute that his slate-coloured coat was in need of a brush, she was as shocked as she had been by his hunger.

Neither spoke till that gruesome meal was over. He put down his cup and leant back.

“What slaves we are !” he murmured with a smile. “For we are all dependent on the favour of our clamorous digestions.”

She answered with a look of reproach. It is astounding how maternal a woman will become upon the least provocation. She added, as if by an afterthought, that “she really believed he should drink another cup of tea.”

He shook his head.

“I am myself again, thanks to your husband” —he looked at her intently—“who I trust will understand that I should never have behaved so unpardonably, except under dire necessity.”

"I'm perfectly sure that Charlie will understand everything."

She slowly pulled the bell-cord.

"Will you please take away that tray?" she told the parlourmaid who presently appeared.

She occupied herself, as the parlourmaid obeyed, with some tiny Japanese figures which stood on a cabinet. She seated herself, as the door closed, upon a scythe-shaped settee.

"Father," she said, "you must never neglect yourself like this again."

She doubted if he heard her. He was buried in thought. He was studying the carpet. He presently looked up. She saw that he was smiling.

"Yesterday I was threatened with arrest," he said. "You did not know that?"

The breath she was drawing ended in a sob. Her surroundings became unreal. He saw her dismay and went on:

"No, no. But there is really no possibility of it. I did not mean to surprise you." He hesitated. "I assure you, there is no possibility of it."



It seemed to her that his assurance was just in time. She heard his voice as though he were whispering from a distance. She feared she might faint. She partially recovered her self-possession.

"Why?" she murmured. "Why should you expect to be—arrested?"

"Why?" He went on bitterly: "But I should imagine you would see that for yourself. It was natural that I should expect it. Hourly expect it, you know. It would have followed the application of Conscription to Ireland."

"Conscription to Ireland?"

He regarded her in a puzzled manner.

"But of course! That news is by now ancient." He was evidently struck by a thought. "You do not mean to say you were unaware . . . ?"

She hung her head. She was obsessed, in spite of herself, by her old feeling that there was something criminal in her indifference to Ireland.

"No. I never knew. I was too busy—with Charlie."

He interrupted with a shout of laughter in

which there was no revelation of his debonair self.

“Isle of the Saints!” he began. “Is it on such that thy honour—” Breaking off, he mastered his emotion. “I beg your pardon. To talk cheaply like that is often a great temptation. It was quite disgraceful, of course. But,” he concluded with painstaking emphasis, “I—have—been—the victim of—a great—shock.”

He clenched his fists and relaxed them. Raising his right hand, he passed it over his beard.

“Yes. A shock,” he whispered.

He stared at the wall. It was now impossible for Margaret to divine his thoughts. He shivered once. He successfully struggled with his agitation. He straightened his shoulders.

“But I wait tranquilly,” he said.

He went on quietly :

“I never believed that they would extend Conscription to Ireland. But let that pass, for it is the present that concerns us.” He paused. “You remember O’Gorman? It was he who shocked me, and it happened yesterday. Very late, you know. It had been a thick

afternoon hushed with a fog. Suffocating, like a grey web in which you were hopelessly entangled. I had been dreaming, I think, when he rang the bell. I was just awake, and I thought it was the milk, for I heard a most reassuring clatter of milk-cans. I suppose that in future the sound will indescribably depress me. After all, sounds can never be reassuring. They are but symbols, pleasant or dreadful according to the memories they evoke.

"The memories they evoke! Well. He came into my room like an avalanche, I think. He fell upon me, as it were. So the shock, you see, was a very literal one. I said, if I remember, 'Will you not sit down? Have you had tea?' He looked at me. I realized then that his suffering was such that the offer of food seemed an insult.

"He sat down, however. 'Count Kettle,' he began. Well. You know the style he affects. I cannot, I am afraid, imitate it. In any case I am sick at heart. I said nothing. I saw, by that time, that some unforeseeable disclosure was impending. And I could only wait faithfully, like a soldier awaiting an

attack which might come from anywhere. 'I am to be arrested this night,' he informed me, 'for the traffic I have been holding with Germany.' "

Margaret murmured her comprehension. She had guessed that this was coming. Her father misunderstood her.

"Yes," he said impressively, "I can easily believe that you do not believe it. At first—well, I did not believe it myself. I had looked on him, up till then, as thoroughly typical of the men with whom I was striving." He reflected. "You know," he continued, "it almost broke my heart."

He once more began to betray agitation.

"Yet there was no doubt of it. He admitted the details of his, yes, treachery, quite frankly. The deadliest form of cynicism. I tell you, it was shocking. Shocking, do I say? Abominable! For here was a man whom I believed an altruist, and all the time he was a mercenary, using ideals as a cloak for his sordid practices. He was paid by Germany to foment trouble in Ireland. He was prostituting an ideal, I say! You will forgive me the use of the word?"

He had gradually strung himself to a fine pitch of emotion. He plucked at his beard and bent forward as if he were entreating a shallow world not to misjudge his sincerity. His brilliant eyes were brighter than ever with an animation that was unnatural and therefore terrifying. It would be impossible to express the scorn which he threw into the word *trouble*. His voice shook, while he narrated O'Gorman's confession, as though he were in agony, as though he were confessing his own shame. He partially controlled his emotion and continued :

“ I can finish the story briefly. In spite of the admission he made he dared . . . he actually justified himself in inviting me to perjury. Remember, I am not exaggerating ! It appeared that he thought he might still be safe if I would testify to his—his honourable character and the honesty of his actions. Honourable ! His word, not mine. Honourable character ! That was the actual phrase. He invited me to testify that he was an honourable and an upright man ! He wanted me to swear that he had never had dealings with Germany ! He took it for granted that I would consent ! ”



He laughed.

“ But he made a mistake. He had admitted the truth to convince me of the necessity of what he wanted me to do. But I should have been better convinced if he had admitted nothing. Then I should have come forward to testify to my belief in his innocence, for”—his voice sank to a whisper—“ I trusted him, you know. Germany? It was not his traffic with Germany that shocked me, but the discovery that his enthusiasm for sacred things was the hollowest of shams. He has attempted to drag chivalry down to the level of commerce . . . Well, it is another victory for materialism.”

He stood up.

“ I yielded, then, to my anger. And I shall never regret that—never! I ordered him to leave my house. And—what do you suppose?—he tried to coerce me with threats. He threatened to betray, when he was arrested, that all the officials of the Society of St. Patrick were as guilty as he. With that he took himself off before I had time to strike him. I spent an hour that is indescribable, and then I perceived that I must instantly come to you.”

His animation left him as he ended his tale. He again sat down. His eyes grew dull and speculative. His hands trembled. Margaret, too, he had reduced to a like condition. But her mind darted upon the only solution that seemed feasible, and she did not hesitate to express it.

"For protection?" she whispered. "Yes. Indeed we shall hide you! They shall never get you, father!"

He regarded her curiously.

"Hide? But certainly not! Of course the Society of St. Patrick has had nothing to do with Germany!"

He stiffened.

"*Ma fille*, you do not—you cannot know how your suggestion has hurt me. Men like myself are apt to be dazzled by the mere hopelessness of a cause—as we decided, once. I remember that. Once in my life I have found myself left alone. Once I set out to sacrifice for a cause which, as I discovered, never existed. I went to Madero in Mexico. I feel an old man, and I doubt if I could survive such another disillusionment." He hesitated. "It would succeed in breaking my heart."

He smiled.

“But I thank God, you know, that there is no question of that. As you are aware, I founded the Society of St. Patrick. So there can be no question of its officials being agitators, paid agents of Germany. I know that every one of them is actuated by selfless motives, by such motives as actuate me. There is Patrick Lochrane, our Secretary, a man to whom I have shown my heart, and who, by his sympathy, has proved himself worthy of the confidence. There is our Treasurer, you know, Dennis Harrigan. Once, when I was losing heart, he told me that it was the thought of my ideals that kept him from committing suicide. And there is our Lecturer, Booth O’Hare. It would almost be sacrilege if he spoke as he does without believing what he said. And there are many others: Hayes, Walsh, MacKerragh, Coughlin, Kerry. The idea of their insincerity is impossible.”

He rose and began to pace the floor.

“Impossible!” he repeated with finality. “But doubtless O’Gorman—by this time arrested, remember—doubtless he will utter some slander. Hide? No. I shall rather

court publicity in Ireland. That will be the answer to his slander. The idealists of Ireland will all rally to their country. But this is a tale that no letter is secret enough to contain, do you see? So in the first place I have come to you."

Margaret had followed his narrative with interest, accompanied by misgiving which had changed, at the last, to bewilderment. She was very uneasy. She was far from sure that her father was as free of danger as he supposed.

"Why have you come to me?" she suddenly asked.

"Every one has a right to a second chance." He smiled reassuringly, "St. Augustine, he was not always a saint."

She looked at him helplessly—hopelessly, too. Her uneasiness affected him. He checked his wandering, glanced at her, sat down, tilted his head, stared at the ceiling.

"See," he began. "I shall tell you an anecdote of long ago. Then, I believe, you will understand." He settled his attention. "In Dublin, I have heard, the story is told against me . . . Well, it was like this: Once

I was invited to a rehearsal at the Abbey Theatre, to give them my advice about certain details of the production. The play was a strange drama of Imperial Rome. The most important character was a statesman, you know, who was tempted and betrayed the confidence reposed in him. After the rehearsal was over we discussed, I remember, how that statesman should have acted. There were many solutions propounded, interesting, above all, for the light they shed upon their several promoters' ethics. For my part, the solution seemed ridiculously obvious. So, when my opinion was asked, I was able to give it at once. I said: 'He should have stayed in Rome and prayed the emperor for a sword.' "

A dreadful idea occurred to Margaret. Eager to discover that it was untrue, she started forward. Ignoring her, her father continued in a positive voice:

"The only thing to do, you know. Any one may fall—I scarcely blame him—but then, of course, he must cancel his transgression by voluntarily seeking expiation." He looked at her intently, and his eyes glistened with affection and pride and apprehension. "My



daughter," he concluded slowly, "what a pleasant expiation is yours!"

She suppressed a scream with difficulty. She had learnt in a flash the misunderstanding which had taken place. She thrust her knowledge from her, as though she were thrusting the misunderstanding. She told herself that there must be some mistake. She then comforted herself with the belief that her father had come to demand only a nominal token of her allegiance to those ideals in which she had never believed, which, for that matter, she had never been able to comprehend. Circumstances robbed her of her illusions, as they have a habit of doing. Her father abandoned his reticence.

"I have told you," he said eloquently, "what our answer to the slander will be. Panic? Flight? Signs of guilt? Ah! none of these, Margaret! We shall rather show our confidence in one another by rallying to the spot where they can most easily find us. As our Society is innocent, so shall it court an inquiry. And every Irishman—and woman—is wanted. You see? No matter how greatly in the past a man may have sinned, no matter

how lacking in faith he may have been—Well ! Here is a glorious opportunity of wiping out the stain of the past. A penance, if you will. Or a sort of indulgence.” He could no longer repress his emotions. “And I,” he said exultantly, “I have brought you the sword. I have pointed out to you—to my own daughter—the chance of expiation for which you have no doubt been waiting.” He moistened his lips. “We are fighting a duel with England, and we naturally expect that England will fight in return. But to have our sincerity questioned that is unbearable, and impossible ! To have it suggested to the whole world that the cause to which we are committed is a sham, a mere pretext which we are paid by Germany to adopt—that is unforgivable ! If it were true, we should have no place in which to hide our shame. Like Judas, you know. Why ! We are knights, do you see ? We are the servants of chivalry, and they would have it that we are only the slaves of Germany !

“But to come back to your own case. When the significance of his threat, of O’Gorman’s threat, dawned upon me, I thought of you . . .

You know, I have never found life the complex thing that so many people make of it. I said to myself: 'She has cast a doubt upon her sincerity. She shall be the first to vindicate her faith.' I have never understood your marriage, do you see. For you could not marry as you did without betraying the ideals to which you were brought up. But I know, of course, that you have repented by this time, not, perhaps, of your marriage but of the sacrifice of your convictions which it involved. I bring you this chance of expiation."

He paused. He clearly expected her to say something, to thank him, perhaps. A minute passed.

"But," she said in a frightened whisper, "but to do what you want—that would mean danger, would it not?"

He rose as if she had struck him.

"Danger! I cannot understand you. I am never to believe—"

"No, no, I cannot understand, either, but don't, please don't believe what is cruel about me, father! You may be quite right in what you say. But if you and I were to go back—why, at least we'd be arrested!"

She saw that a climax was approaching. She stood up. She suddenly lifted her arms and took off her hat, as though its weight were intolerable.

"We might easily be arrested," he gravely assented.

"Yes, and suffer before they would let us go free!"

He again assented.

"Well, then?"

"That would be a part of your expiation."

"My expiation!" She was growing more primitive. "And what have I to expiate? What? What have I to expiate? Please tell me! Or has love become a mortal sin—"

"Love." He checked her. "Love is in itself harmless. But in your case, you can satisfy your love only by sacrificing the ideals that were precious to you."

"And what are these ideals? Oh! But you once told me what they were! 'The vindication of a noble sentiment,' you said. It might be right to make a sacrifice for ideals if you had a sensible result to show for it. But all your ideals are—are sentimental, is what I mean. You want to turn Ireland into

a republic, because poetic justice—that's what we called it at school—because poetic justice would be satisfied by that. But not because the lot of the people would be better. You don't know about that. You don't trouble to know—"

She broke off. She sobbed once, for she was afraid of what she had admitted.

"She has not repented, then," he whispered, as though he were admitting his daughter's shortcomings before God. He became terrible: "But you must repent, my girl! I say you *shall* come back with me to Ireland!"

His manner made her again desperate. She proceeded to remove the last possibility of misunderstanding.

"Yes. But you don't think of Charlie. You tell me to go back to Ireland and invite trouble, or at least ridicule, by mixing myself with all sorts of silly ideas which belong to the middle ages. You do that! Yes. But you don't remember that I bear my husband's name. I'd be mixing him up, too, with the trouble. I'd be exposing to danger his reputation as a practical man."

She had meant to be firm. Her indictment



had passed into an appeal. She finished with another sob. Despising her weakness, she tried to conceal it by hurrying to the mantelshelf. Under the pretence of scrutinizing a silver match-box she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes. She heard her father as if he were speaking from a distance :

"Yet your honour must have precedence of your husband. You espoused ideals before you espoused him."

Her anger grew ungovernable. She turned.

"I hate your ideals! I hate your ideals! I've always hated them!"

Her father broke down. He stumbled, and cautiously lowered himself upon that scythe-shaped settee which she had occupied at the beginning of the interview. No cabinet-maker could surely be so cynical as to fashion his pieces in frivolous shapes if he reflected on the domestic tragedies in which they must sometimes play a part, significant, if silent. Breathing more heavily than was his wont, her father regarded her with an intent expression which suggested the upheaval through which he was passing. He appeared overcome by a sense of failure.

"I don't think I see."

He passed his hand before his eyes as though the word *see* had suggested a physical defect. He mistrustfully surveyed the room, as if that, too, he expected to find different, as if he had learnt to question the reality of even his simplest perceptions.

"You surely cannot mean—"

He broke off. He seemed afraid lest he might expose himself to ridicule by expressing a fantastic notion.

"I do not mean that there should be more mistakes. That is all. I don't want to hurt you, father. But I am now fighting for the possession of my soul, I think! A time comes in every woman's life—perhaps in every man's—when she must force her world to recognize her for what she is. I feel it here"—she touched her breast—"I know that my time has come. Oh! don't you understand? I must insist upon my beliefs or be a hypocrite?"

He was now listening closely.

"A hypocrite," she repeated. "But, you may say, the danger of that has not so far troubled me. Till a month ago, I was a girl, and a girl dreams. She does not live, I tell you. Charlie

has wakened me to reality," she concluded distractedly; "to all that reality means. I seem to see, now, the—the meaning of so many things! The parable of the Sleeping Beauty . . . Once mother must have felt like this. Once she spoke to me. Long ago," she whispered with a sob. "Long ago. On the very afternoon that she died."

She was startled by her own discovery. She lost her self-consciousness.

"Yes," she said in wonder. "Mother must have endured what I am this minute enduring. I wish I could remember!" She wrinkled her forehead in an effort to reconstruct the past. "'A young girl, standing on the edge of life . . . jumps in . . . into the prettiest pool, of course.' That was it! 'The prettiest pool!' I was—I was sure that I 'wasn't going to make that mistake, at any rate. Ah! You didn't know, father! You don't know what you did to mother."

"Margaret," he entreated her, "I do most earnestly beg you to spare me unnecessary suspense. Oh," he went on, in a fit of nervous irritation, "I think your marriage has changed you! I think you have lost your faith or your

reason. I do not understand your marriage with the man who is your husband."

"Don't you?" She looked at him sadly. "You are putting your finger upon a great misapprehension, which must be got rid of . . . for ever . . . now. Strange things have often a natural explanation. Why do we reject it? Think, for a moment," she concluded. "What have you yourself, father, not risked in the past . . . to escape?"

She plucked at her breast, as if to pluck out the burden that was there weighing her down. She realized the futility of her action. She slowly lowered her hands and, after a moment's indecision, clasped them behind her back. She now appeared a sad prisoner, proudly facing a tribunal which she had little hope of convincing . . . A passing cloud blotted out the May sun. The sombreness which followed hinted at evening.

"The earliest thing I can remember," she said, "is being told to live and die for the ideals that you considered wonderful. They haunted my childhood. Is it any wonder that I should hate the name *romance*, when romance has interfered with twenty years of my life?"

I was handicapped from the start. My reputation, the reputation you had determined I should have, went before me to the convent, was waiting for me there. Yes, on the day I arrived. I had no chance to shape my own life, make my own friends. Because I was the daughter of a romantic man, I was expected to be romantic, too, to be indifferent to the things that pleased me, to be engrossed with the things that I did not understand. I cannot understand them! The things you taught me—they seem wicked. I do not know how you manage to believe them. I believe in dealing with things as they are, with the world as it is, not as I want it to be.

“You went to Mexico. I could not understand why, and I suffered through fear of your safety. But I was still supposed to be sympathizing with what you were doing. And when my sorrow showed itself in my eyes, they teased me. They teased me by saying that I was fretting to go with you. I was as silent as God upon His Altar. God forgive me! I suspected mother.” She was quietly weeping. “I only knew when she was dying—that her burden was—was mine, too.”



The clouds thickened and spread. There was no hope of the sun. The charming drawing-room was depressing in the grey light that remained. Margaret was unconsciously influenced by her surroundings. She sat down weakly, while her bosom rose and fell like the bosom of the sea after a storm. Her father's beard glistened more swarthily than ever. It contrasted with his face, paler than clay.

"My cup is full," he murmured. "My cup is surely full."

"You will say," she went on in a dead voice, "that I might have told you. But how was I to find words? You wouldn't have believed me. I should have had to explain convincingly. And I saw only dimly the great sad truths which were slipping by me like shadows. I drifted, I think. But it wasn't weakness—no! It never struck me that my trouble could be a concrete one. It seemed abstract. And I thought it foolish to trouble about an abstraction. And then, suddenly, it became a practical difficulty. You committed me, before I knew what was happening, to a course of action that I couldn't approve. Not with a clean conscience. You sent me as the advocate

of a cause which I did not love, never could love. I think my head was in a whirl. I realized nothing but the danger, the great danger, you were so uselessly inviting."

She again reviewed the past.

"Yes. You look upon what I did as a betrayal of my ideals. But you are so mistaken. Never had I been truer to myself than then. I acted as I did—Yes, I went to Scotland to save you from yourself for ever. There was instinct, I suppose, in my action. I was just a girl, and I was living like the heroine of a poem. The strain was too much. I broke away gladly at the first chance that was given me."

Her voice grew fainter.

"To you my marriage seems inexplicable. I love my husband. But I was ripe for such love, I think. I could have loved any man who would take me away from the consequences of the reputation you had fastened on me. I think I could have loved a grocer—just any grocer. With a grocer, one might have peace of mind," she whispered. "With a grocer, there would be safety from romance."

Her words were succeeded by a silence

broken startlingly by the loud ticking of a small clock which had hitherto managed to perform its duties unnoticed. Clocks have personalities. They resemble the well-meaning individual who can never endure a silence, who must fill the gaps in a serious conversation with a stupefying load of words. To Margaret, the pervasion of the ticking was the last straw. She was about to scream, when the door was timidly rattled. Her anæmic parlourmaid came in.

“ Please, ma’am ! How many for dinner ? ”

Recognition and insensibility perilously struggled in Margaret’s eyes. The former won the battle.

“ Dinner for two,” she said decisively.

The parlourmaid left. Margaret apparently relapsed into the mood that had been interrupted. The flame of her reason had flickered. It was possibly saved from extinction by that trivial appeal to her nature.

## V

A sound disturbed her. Looking up, she saw her father had risen.

"Margaret," he began in a pleading voice, "this cannot be true, I am certain. No. I do not question your fancied sincerity, not that. But I find it too incredible that my daughter, that any noble-hearted woman should deliberately invite the consequences to which the application of your professed beliefs would lead. Use your imagination," he went on. His wonderful eyes grew bright again. "Think. I beg you to think what would happen, if the ideals (so far as they can be called ideals) to which you are drawn, were realized! You are young. You are fascinated by the specious appearance of novelty. You have not yet considered. I can understand that. Then you can have no idea of the dreadful consummation which these principles, to you so innocent, would

bring about. I warn you most solemnly, Margaret, that they would undoubtedly destroy the spirit of high adventure."

He waited for her to confirm this simple explanation of her conduct. His badly concealed eagerness was pathetic. She sighed.

"And I should like that to happen. You talk as though the spirit of adventure were a blessing. But it is a great calamity." She noticed his dismay and went on: "Wait! It is you who have failed to realize what you are doing. You don't seem to see that you are helping to bring about an evil. The triumph of your friends would put an end to the reign of prudence."

"Prudence! The check to initiative! I wish, from my heart to God, that I could put an end to its reign." He laughed sadly.

"Hopeless!"

She intuitively knew what he meant.

"Yes, yes! I see that! We are—cruelly separated, are we not?"

"Neither of us is to blame."

"We know, each of us, what we mean."

"Yet never can we be intelligible to one another."



"We can never argue!"

"We have attempted to dispute upon the truth. But we have no criterion as to what truth may be."

They looked at one another. They were secretly frightened by the terrible conclusion with which they were left, to which they were logically bound. He broke the silence first.

"That being so, it remains only for me to leave you."

She darted to the door.

"No!" Guarding the handle with outspread fingers she faced him. "No!"

He looked at her with amazement. Her breathing betrayed her emotion. He asked:

"Exactly what do you mean by this?"

"It means that I have no longer any hope in words. Deeds are better. They always are. I put my trust in deeds which I shall not try to justify. I realize more than ever that you have got to be saved from yourself. I can never make you see this. So I've got to—you force me to depend on myself. I shall no more let you go than I would let go a man who was wanting to commit suicide."

He was whiter and more shrunken than ever. He said after a pause :

“ This is just madness, and so much more pain for both of us. Suffering has made you unreasonable.” He sighed. “ I can understand that. For,” he went on patiently, “ you cannot keep me against my will. But how otherwise are you to prevent me following the light that I—that I once believed you to have ? ”

“ I shall tell my husband.”

Her words had their effect. He shivered. This shivering was followed by an expression of distress. He met her eyes, as if he were perceiving, with incredulity, a relentlessness hitherto unsuspected.

“ You cannot be in earnest,” he murmured in a tone of appeal. “ It would be inconceivable.”

She was tortured beyond endurance. She read in his face a rare purity which reminded her of some shy hunted creature of the woods, grieved by a painful operation, the imperative-ness of which was beyond its comprehension. Her heart bled for him. Deep within her, a lake of tears overflowed. She longed for the means of reaching his mind, of making

him understand that what she was contemplating was for the best. She wondered: "Why does a great love demand a trampling upon our inclinations?"

She told herself: "This is how God must have suffered when He created hell . . ."

He repeated slowly:

"Inconceivable."

His voice roused her, but she did not try to persuade him. She said as though she were saying a lesson:

"I shall tell my husband."

She was miserably aware of the impression of obstinacy that her words would convey.

"Ah! But you cannot! You would not do that!" he cried in a tone that again wrung her heart.

"I shall tell him."

"But consider, I beg you!" He threw aside all dignity. "I say nothing against your husband. But you know he has been trained to facts!"

Realizing that he had appealed in vain, he went on:

"He will treat my honour as—a fact! Margaret! Margaret! It is so, I tell you!"

Yes, he will regard the situation, this tragically delicate situation, as though it were a business problem. He will bend upon it all his prudence. Prudence!" He laughed. "He will call in the clumsy help of those soulless things with which they enforce the iron dictates of materialism: a court of law to order my imprisonment: a medical board to decide that I am merely insane . . . But surely you could not be so unfair! Consider. Consider, Margaret. You would not betray my confidence?"

He paused expectantly. She said sadly:

"I must do anything—anything, do you see?—that is in my power to prevent your returning to Ireland."

He threw up his hands at this. He suddenly calmed himself.

"But wait till you see my point." He went on with a gaiety that was horrible: "I—I think I understand you now. I was vexed—vexed, that was it—by the mistake I had made in you. You must not take me so seriously."

He moistened his lips.

"Eh? We must agree to differ. It is

quite simple, is it not? You know, these family differences are sad but very inevitable. At least I have always been told that. But I am perfectly contented, do you follow me? We differ. Very well, then. But let us treat our differences lightly. Lightly—that is the word. You shall go your way, and I shall go mine, shall we not? You see. I am myself. You see. You can quite safely bid me good-bye—for the time.”

She had managed to be silent throughout his transparent acting. She now murmured:

“Father, father!”

The cry was dragged from her as a tribute to his simplicity, to his inability to play even a hypocrite's part.

He saw that he had again failed. He again threw up his hands. He gave up pretending and said:

“Well, then, I can only entreat you. You put me in a terrible position. I shall forfeit my honour if I do not return to Ireland. Surely your lips are sealed as to the information you have to-day learnt, for I imparted it owing to a misapprehension? I must immediately return, I assure you. My honour is pledged to



the cause of Irish freedom. Ah! But there is more in it than that, you know. That is but the pivot, I tell you, upon which the situation hangs."

His eyes were lit by a spark of their old animation. He went on:

"My honour is now involved upon the question of that whole code of behaviour about which we so unfortunately differ. If you tell your husband all that I have told you, he will take steps to have me detained here. I shall be eternally disgraced in the eyes of those to whom I have pledged my word. They would never believe my story. It would be too much to expect of them. They will regard me as the vilest of traitors, a soldier who has not only flown from his post at the whisper of danger, but who has almost needlessly betrayed his cause to the enemy that he may consolidate his own position. If I were absent for a week, my honour would be gone for ever. And you talk to me of personal danger! What is personal danger when honour is in jeopardy? Surely you will let me go!"

He spoke quickly, without striving for effect.

She replied in a tone sharper than was her wont :

“ Indeed I will not let you go. I shall never let you pass me. I am certain that there is no truth in what you say. You are suffering from a disease. Or you are possessed, perhaps. I do not know. It seems to me that you are making a tragedy out of nothing. To a girl like myself the sort of honour you are thinking about doesn’t exist. For we look upon our men as individuals, not as members of a company. I can only see you—think of you—as my father, never as President of this Society of St. Patrick that you talk about. Do you suppose that I’ll let my father walk into the trap that is waiting for him? For the sake of some silly rules that men have made? I won’t do it! I can’t!”

She instinctively put her back against the door, as though she expected him to dash for liberty. She left the door. Terrified, she stared at it, as if it had cast her from it. The door opened. Macaig came in. She was too excited to be long astonished at his coming. She slowly turned to her father.

“ He’s here, you see! And so this

settles the matter. For there would be no reason—he wouldn't have been sent, if it hadn't been intended that I should tell him."

She would have said more, but the situation called for an explanation. She was forced to consider one. She realized with apprehension that she must effect an introduction, difficult and dramatic. Her father must guess the intruder's identity. Her father's could not be suspected. Her husband had returned—to find his wife at the climax of a scene with a dark-bearded, white-faced man whom he had never met, whom he had no reason for believing her father. He had been told that the latter was in Ireland. Nothing had occurred to modify what he had been told.

"Good gracious!" said her husband. He seemed disgusted. His stoop was accentuated.

He went on formally:

"I don't think I know . . ."

Margaret realized the conclusion that he was drawing.

"My father," she quickly said.

He replied: "Oh!" in a straightforward manner, hesitated, came forward simply, offered

his hand to her father. The latter ignored the overture.

“ Won’t you shake hands, sir ? ”

Her father now grew nervous. He shook his head. An expression of sadness filled his eyes, as if he were suffering for his apparent churlishness. Macaig, with a murmured “ Well ! ” of resignation, withdrew his hand. She miserably contemplated her two men, glancing from one to the other. Neither, she decided, was at his ease. It was evident that Macaig had determined to ignore the scene which his coming had interrupted. He said, still formally, as though to make conversation :

“ Are you staying long, may I ask ? ”

Count Kettle remained silent.

“ Would you rather I left you, sir, till you finish your talk with Margaret ? ” Macaig went on.

She could no longer bear the suspense of her father’s silence. She interrupted :

“ Our talk is finished. The thing we were discussing—it is decided.”

She was frightened by the high note she detected in her voice. She pulled up sharply, telling herself that “ she must be calm, be

calm." She felt that her head was expanding. The soles of her feet tingled. She was next aware that she was on the floor, that the men were anxiously bending over her. They had been drawn together by her collapse.

They succeeded in establishing her upon the settee. Here was further food for the upholsterer who had designed that piece with an eye only to gaiety. She would not recline. To recline would have been to surrender. She murmured :

"But I must explain. I must explain."

Her will was so strong that in less than two minutes she was able to sit up. Fixing troubled eyes on her husband, she astounded him by saying :

"The door! Lock it. Don't let him go."

She noticed his astonishment.

"Oh! You think I am wandering," she said.

"No, no, I don't. I assure you, I don't." He faintly smiled. "I'm quite in the dark, you know." He reflected. "I think you've been doing too much."

"Your coming when you did—that was Providence," she whispered.



He drew down his lips in his odd little smile.

"The man I was going to—I saw him on the platform at Paisley."

She returned his smile. Her action did much to steady her nerves. She put up a hand and straightened her hair. Her action steadied them completely.

"I want to tell you from the beginning . . . the beginning," she said. She threw him a glance of appeal. "For the trouble is breaking my heart."

He quietly moved closer. She realized that he was showing his sympathy. She was grateful.

She threw a second glance of appeal—at her father, this time. He had evidently decided that he was ruined. He had half turned and was staring at a point in the carpet some few feet ahead of him. The pupils of his melancholy eyes were dilated as though in terror, as though he were visioning the looks of loathing which (thanks to his supposed treachery) he believed the future to have in store for him. His very indifference prompted her to her husband. She realized afresh the unnavigable gulf that now separated her from

her father. She rose with determination. She was again mistress of herself. She spoke directly to Macaig.

"We have hardly mentioned the life out of which you took me. But you know—you know my father's aims. Ideals. That is what he calls them. He has come to tell me that the cause in which he believes is going to be unjustly persecuted. He says that his honour is at stake. He says that he must stand or fall by his cause in Ireland, as an act of faith. He wants me to go back with him. I've told him everything—everything. My duty to you. He won't even listen."

A concerned expression showed in Macaig's eyes. This was followed by what resembled suppressed, but not unpleasant excitement. His lips parted. His face grew darker and for a moment inscrutable. His lips closed. It appeared from their sensitive twitching that he was thinking rapidly—nervously, perhaps.

"You are quite sure that your—principles—are concerned?" he awkwardly demanded of Count Kettle.

"Quite."

She was conscious of a sense of uneasiness,

hard to refer to its source. None the less she went on :

" Did you expect him to say different to that? You don't know him, then . . . But wait till you hear everything. He has founded a Society—the Society of St. Patrick—and all its members are to be accused of a league with Germany. He is the President, don't you see? If he goes back, then he's bound to be the first to be arrested. Perhaps to be killed." She concluded upon a note of emotion : " And indeed I don't know what to say to him! Oh! But facts speak for themselves. I am thankful it's over. I'm thankful that you know the facts."

She had never before so thoroughly appreciated the blessing of a husband, upon whom she could rely, whose mind worked in concord with her own. She leant back with relief and closed her eyes. She was contented for the first time since she had entered to find that her father was awaiting her. Her sense of responsibility was at last gone. Her husband would arrange everything. She watched him from beneath her lashes.

" I'm sorry, sir," he diffidently told Count

Kettle. "But I'm afraid that I can't associate myself with anything that is at all pro-German."

She opened her eyes and sat up. She thought with alarm: "This is not what I expected of him. What does it mean?" She had thus thought, earlier in the day. Burning with the unfairness of the situation, she rose. A protest was upon her lips. It seemed to her monstrous that her ally should thus equivocate. Was she, perhaps, mistaken?

Her father raised his head. She knew, then, that she was not mistaken. A spark of hope was in his eyes once more. He too had detected the significance of her husband's remark, its apparent sympathy. He began with an eagerness which he seemed afraid of displaying:

"Oh, believe me, believe me! You are quite mistaken—quite. I understand your scruples, but they are without foundation. Yes. I am willing to swear to that! My daughter is so far correct. It is true that they will accuse my Society's executive of working in the pay of Germany. But nothing of the sort has happened—I assure you. We are patriots, not mercenaries."

Macaig was dubious.

"Yet you have been trying to bring guns into Ireland. Forgive me if I'm . . . rather outspoken. But those cases that were coming—I guessed what was in them, you know."

"And you guessed right. I shall now attempt to conceal nothing from you. We had no intention of using those weapons for Germany." He concluded with an emphasis that compelled belief: "Either I am a judge of our intentions or you must believe me the most unfortunate of dupes."

His eyes were again brilliant. He went on with assurance:

"And that would be ridiculous. Not to be thought of, you know. I have trusted the executive as I would have trusted my brothers. I deplore an appeal to arms, but what would you have? You know, as well as I know, that it is almost useless to seek justice if you be not in a position to enforce your demands. You must have a sword (as it were) upon which to rest your hand as you are making them. We have been importing weapons, I say, merely that they may supple-



ment justice. We have never considered Germany."

Stimulated by his own enthusiasm, he went on with greater assurance :

" You may say that the affair of Easter Week occurred opportunely for Germany. Well. If that be so, I can only tell you that it was coincidence—an unhappy coincidence, from your point of view." He bowed. " But let us, for the sake of argument, admit that the rising of Easter Week assisted Germany, purely by coincidence. That has no bearing on the subject. The Irish movement for independence is what it seems. It is in no sense a screen for German manœuvres. It follows that, if you choose, you may favour it with a clear conscience. You may facilitate my return to Ireland. You will thereby facilitate the death of a wicked slanderer."

He stopped as though his persuasiveness were exhausted, as though he realized that he must stand or fall by what was said. Macaig seemed to reflect. He then offered his hand.

" Will you shake hands now, sir ? "

Count Kettle's eyes glowed as he took it.

"You believe me?" he said eagerly. "You are convinced of what I say?"

"I believe you."

"You will not hinder my return?"

"As far as I'm concerned, you can go to-night, this minute."

Margaret had so far been a staggered witness of the conversation. Her senses were reeling. Her protest was still upon her lips. She was now shocked into action by the finality of her husband's last remark.

"Oh! Are we both mad?" She paused. "Is everybody mad?"

She had at least expected him to look ashamed. He merely smiled and glanced at her, as though he awaited her approval of the decision he had made. She remembered that she had yearned that morning over his unconscious body. She had thrilled as she told herself how unerringly she could divine his thoughts, how complete was the sympathy between them. What a mistake she had made, what a gigantic mistake! Why, her wise reflections of the morning—they were the most pitiful sophistries of a schoolgirl . . .

She felt, for a moment, with a spasm of panic, that the man before her was a stranger with whom she had been living for weeks on terms of abominable intimacy.

But she would not be put aside like this . . .

He had turned his back. He was obviously on the point of coldly pursuing his monstrous arrangements with her father.

Very well. But she would not be put aside like this . . .

"Charlie!" she called.

He instantly turned, questioning her interruption with his eyes.

"Charlie." She found she was becoming helpless. She said, "Surely you have made a mistake. Or—or am I not myself, after all?"

His interrogative expression was succeeded by one of doubt.

"I'm afraid I don't follow you."

"You are letting him go back to Ireland. To all that you took me from."

"But he has to go back! I see that perfectly, of course, as perfectly as you do."

"I!" She laughed.

He went on, without attending:

"And you've twice alluded to the rather

extraordinary circumstances which led to our marriage. I don't want you to feel that, because you are my wife, you are cut off from your natural sphere. I want you to trust me." He was gentle. "I promise you, I shan't make things difficult, either deliberately or in any roundabout way. I shall go into rooms for a bit or rub along here, if you think we should keep the flat." He finished abruptly, as though he were afraid of emotion: "You shall go back with your father."

Margaret looked at him. She suddenly covered her face with her hands and silently wept. The blood rushed to her head. She could hear, above the singing produced, his quick exclamation. She was soon conscious of his fingers resting on her shoulder. Her fear of his caresses was for the time stronger than her wretchedness. She snatched her hands from her face. She darted from him and put herself behind a chair.

"I won't go, I won't go!" she said.

That, she thought, was explicit enough. She noticed at the same instant that it was not, that he still misunderstood.

"I'm sorry," he told her. "I see what

you mean. All right. I shall go with you. Perhaps I should have thought of it sooner."

"Oh! don't you understand?" she said. "What has happened? What have I done? Charlie!" She dimly realized her obligation to reply. Concentrating her faculties, she concluded: "Under no circumstances will I go."

There was fully a minute's silence. The ticking of the clock again maddened her. She was on the point of complaining. She parted her lips. She realized in time how frivolous her complaint would appear to the men who had no perception of a woman's mind. Her father, she noticed, had withdrawn a pace or two, as though to emphasize his detachment from the scene that was enacted. His lips betrayed the suspicion of a smile in which there was much sadness. She felt with conviction that a disclosure, shocking in its effects to the three of them, was inevitable. She wondered how her husband could remain oblivious.

"I don't want to go," she presently whispered.

That was weak, she decided. She felt that she had a right to her husband's sympathy



without that. She felt, with resentment, that the fact should have been (to him) self-evident. The ticking, however, had become unbearable. She had to say something.

"I don't want to go."

He regarded her narrowly with a hard expression. She had never before seen him look like this.

"I can imagine you don't," he said dryly. "People never do want to make themselves uncomfortable. Sometimes they have to. Proper feeling demands it, as it were." His expression softened. "But forgive me. I've no doubt you really mean to go."

"Indeed I don't!"

"Not?" His tone was ominous.

"Nothing—oh, nothing will make me go back to . . . that!"

He regarded her curiously. He averted his eyes. His lips grew determined.

"Well," he said quietly, in the manner of one who has washed his hands of responsibility, who has given warning of his intentions, "well, if you won't do your duty, of course . . . ." He concluded with decision: "If you don't go with your father, I shall."

Her father's indifference was banished by this. His eyes shone.

"You mean that?"

Macaig met his glance squarely.

"Yes. If I can be of any use. I believe I could be. My presence in Ireland will show that there is at least one individual, not an Irishman, who believes in the honesty of your intentions. And my wife's duty naturally devolves on me."

"Charlie, Charlie!" she reproached him.

He looked at her.

"Don't you love me any more?" she pleaded. "Have you forgotten that you once cared for me?"

"And what made me care for you? What drew me to you—first of all?"

He too seemed to be reproaching her. She was amazed. She shook her head.

"My ideal," he went on. "But I told you about that on the evening I asked you to marry me. I thought that you knew. I believed you were capable of sympathizing with all that attracted me."

"So I was!" she put in eagerly.

His look of incredulity frightened her. She

at last suspected the truth. The truth was so terrible that she could not bring herself to face it.

“ Ah! What was your ideal? ” she cried.

“ Something beautiful,” he answered. “ The negation of all that my wretched profession involves.”

The clock struck a single note. Glancing at it, she saw that the time was half-past five. It appeared to her that there was something fantastic in this. She could hardly believe that it was only ninety minutes since she had stood on the platform and watched, with little apprehension, her husband's train disappearing into the smoke. She shivered. She breathed, from habit, a quick prayer—and then waited for her husband to confirm the impression he had given her. She thought that if it were true, it would complete the ruin of her happiness. He was not long in beginning.

“ I told you how I came to enter my father's office. It was ridiculous. The thing was settled from the time I was a baby. Everybody regarded it as settled. Even my drawing-master—don't you remember?—pitched upon

me as a boy who was bound to be interested in ships. In the light of my father's occupation, I expect, it seemed to them that a ship-owner was the best thing I could possibly become. By the time I was able to feel, they'd have said I was vacillating if I had stood out for anything different. Yet I heard so much about business, and met so many businessmen, that I grew tired of everything connected with it. I couldn't stand the thought of doing the same prosaic thing day after day and year after year. Awful! I longed for some—some colour in my life."

"Romance?" she whispered, as if she were a doctor diagnosing a familiar complaint.

He reflected.

"Yes. I believe that expresses what I'm driving at, though I never thought of it till now."

Her fears were at last confirmed. She drew back, passing a hand before her eyes, as if to guard them from a danger that had arisen in front of her. He went on, before she could speak:

"I suppose I am what you would call a

romantic man, though the word has a popular meaning with which I shall never agree." He continued with a hint of vehemence: "You don't know, Margaret, what it means to be tied to an office-chair—always! And to be painfully aware of the jolly splendid adventurous life. Free from care. The life you have been accustomed to. Nowadays people laugh at Don Quixote. Well, I don't laugh. I envy Don Quixote. I envied your father, from what I heard of him—any one who was free from the stuffy regularity of the life that has been forced upon me. I tell you—forced! I used to long for some adventure to happen to me—"

"But why did you marry me?"

He looked his astonishment.

"Why? You are my romance," he said.

He began again. He seemed to find pleasure in this belated revelation.

"After what I've told you . . . You surely don't imagine that I could have settled down to spend my life with the girl I was meeting every day, a girl with no imagination? Do you think for a moment that I could have inhabited



the same house with a woman who cared for nothing but her babies, the accepted standards of behaviour, a domesticated existence? The kind of woman that doctors and lawyers and business-men are always marrying? That morning in Dublin, when I came from behind my desk to help you, I was coming from behind all the conventions that I detested. Is it extraordinary that I fell in love with you? You were the first girl I had met, who was a daughter of the adventurous—well, *romantic* is your word—the romantic life that I coveted.”

He sighed.

“Yes. I hoped, by marrying you, to bring at least the semblance of romance into my life—”

But she could endure no longer.

“And I! I loved you, I married you, because I hated romance! The girl you say you couldn’t live with—I’m the girl. I do believe that! I could never have loved you. I couldn’t have let myself. But I thought you were a plain, steady, dependable man with no—no dreams—who would take me away for ever from the hand-to-mouth life I was

leading. Oh!" she concluded, "but I'm feeling old—old. I've seen too much of this—this thing that you call romance! It broke my mother's heart, do you hear? It's breaking, it has broken mine."

## VI

There was silence, when she had spoken once. "It seems spiteful," she said wearily.

Neither of the men attempted to dispute her. The bitterness in her heart thereupon increased. She had hoped to be contradicted. The blood again sang in her ears. She was temporarily isolated from the most trivial of other sounds. They gradually grew audible: The exasperating ticking of the clock, her husband's rapid breathing, the murmur of the traffic in St. George's Road, and (dominating these) the excited yelling of a boy's voice in Renfrew Street. Words emerged from an unintelligible crescendo, till the boy was below and his message appreciable.

"*Globe*, seven o'clock!" he was crying. "A German plot in Ireland!"

So here, thought Margaret, was the beginning of her Calvary. She was not greatly excited. She must again get used, she told herself, to

this feeling of sickness every time a boy passed her window calling the latest sensation. It was the strain of such excitement, she remembered, which had broken her mother's heart. She herself had tasted its bitterness while her father was in Mexico, in the Easter Week of 1917, when she was brought to the Carmelite Friary . . . She tried to get used to it, but vainly. The thudding of her heart would not be stilled. "This cannot go on," she decided, looking to the future of her marriage. She found herself thinking: "Better a complete separation. Tears. Nothing."

Her father was excited, however. The shrill voice so cheerfully regarded as an insult to his country disturbed him. The faint blue veins, at his temples and on the back of his hands, rose. His head shook nervously. A startled expression appeared in his eyes. His lips set. He muttered: "You must forgive me," and started in confusion for the door. Macaig guessed his purpose. Macaig was lost in a reverie, his eyes lowered, his lips parted in pity of his shattered ideal. His goodness now asserted itself, and with a murmured: "I'll get it for you," he anticipated his father-in-law.

He searched in his pockets, as he went, for the requisite penny.

Neither father nor daughter spoke while he was gone. Each took care to avoid the other's eyes.

He was absent for a time more considerable than the distance demanded. He at length returned. The pink paper that he held was crumpled and opened. His cheek-bones were flushed, as though he were greatly excited. He closed the door, approached a chair, dropped the paper upon it. He went to the window, passing Margaret but refraining from catching her eye.

Count Kettle seemed to have lost his dread of the news, or he had perhaps transferred it to a danger that appeared more urgent—his son-in-law. He was gazing at the latter with apprehension.

"Well?" he said.

Macaig turned.

"Yes?"

"You are saying nothing. You know, I cannot help noticing that. You pass no judgment, no condemnation. Yet I see you have looked at the paper."



Macaig's lips quivered fastidiously. His manner was aloof.

"You must forgive me," he said, "but I have lost my interest in Ireland."

Count Kettle was an Irishman to some purpose. He sneered.

"I would rather," he declared with suppressed passion, "I would rather you had honestly said that you regretted the promise you made me, when you found the risk you would have to take. I am still, thank God, possessed of the use of my wits. It seems to me strange that a gentleman should lose his interest—so soon, so very soon, after passing his word."

Macaig stiffly replied :

"That is because you have allowed the wish to be father to the thought."

"How so?"

"I don't think that's difficult to answer. The cause you represent is thoroughly bound up with Germany's."

"That's a lie, sir! If we lived in the last century—" He broke off. He mastered himself with an effort. "Forgive me that remark," he humbly went on. "But you do

not understand how I suffer, when I hear what you said."

"And don't you think I suffer?"

"Then why do you say it?"

"It's true."

"It never could be true, I tell you!"

Macaig indicated the paper.

"Well, read it for yourself."

Count Kettle looked at him strangely. His expression was a mixture of compassion and mistrust. He made a decision, picked up the paper, gripped it with both hands. A change then came over him. His hands trembled. His glance was unsteady. He lowered the paper; raised his head; became motionless, looking at his companions with a pleading expression. His assurance had vanished. It had never been real.

"I cannot read," he whispered, putting down the paper. "Unpardonable cowardice . . . Still—I can't do it."

Macaig picked up the paper, smoothed it, opened it. "'Yesterday evening'" he began in that dry formal voice which had done so much to foster Margaret's misapprehension, "'yesterday evening a large number of

prominent Irishmen were arrested, all officials of the notorious Society of St. Patrick. On examination upon a charge of holding treasonable communications with the German enemy, Patrick Lochrane, the secretary, pleaded guilty. He admitted that for nearly a year he had been working in the pay of Germany.' "

A sound escaped Count Kettle.

"He admits it!" he murmured incredulously.

"No chance, then! No hope!"

" 'Mr. Dennis Harrigan, the treasurer,' " Macaig read on, " 'pleaded guilty to the same charge, and offered the remarkable excuse that he had never believed in the aims which the Society was pledged to advance.' "

Count Kettle winced.

"Yet he once told me," he said sadly, "that it was the thought of my ideals that prevented him from committing suicide."

Macaig further read on:

" 'Mr. Booth O'Hare—' "

But Count Kettle had apparently no more fortitude at his command.

"Not—not Booth!" he broke in, as though he were pleading for the soul of a man he loved.

Macaig lowered the paper and tossed it aside.

"The same as the others," he said. "But you can read his confession for yourself."

He changed his position. Count Kettle had no wish to follow the advice given. He had curiously managed to rid himself of emotion and was still passive. His chin was lowered. His black beard was spread by the pressure of his chest. Margaret noticed that upon either cheek-bone a bright spot had appeared. She was horrified. She had never before seen his pallor relieved.

Macaig turned, hesitated, stepped forward.

"So I cannot go to Ireland," he said. He might have been resuming a subject just dropped. "You will see why, I hope. I sympathize with you—individually. But I may no longer sympathize with your cause."

Count Kettle raised his head. The ghost of a smile twisted his lips for a moment.

"I can no longer ask you," he replied. He paused. "It seems that the cause I was fighting for never existed at all."

He smiled again.

"Never existed at all," he repeated. "Yes. I have made a mistake . . . You know, these

words sound so simple, yet what a tragedy they convey to me! . . . This happened once before—once. When I went confidently to help Madero in Mexico. History repeats itself, they say. How cruel, don't you think? I am wondering if it will always repeat itself, as I reach for the ideals that are constantly eluding my touch. What am I seeking for? What all men long for unquenchably—if they have had a dream of what lies behind the stars . . . Do not let us try to name it. Perhaps it has no existence . . . I have made a mistake. I should have looked for what I seek . . . elsewhere." His tone grew biting. "Elsewhere? Among shopkeepers," he said with irony. "Among shopkeepers and policemen and—and shipowners."

He calmed himself. He turned to Margaret so unexpectedly that she drew back.

"And you too, Margaret! You too have made a mistake, have you not? I am right? You wanted the fleshpots of Egypt? You thought that your marriage would bring them to you? Why, girl! you have been the victim of a pretty joke. Laugh, girl! The world cannot be bothered with tears. Let me



give you some belated advice. You should have married—whom? Why, Booth O'Hare, of course! His profession was so romantic! Surely you might have known that he was bound to have the soul of a shopkeeper?"

He noticed Macaig. A fresh idea struck him. He modified his bitterness.

"And you! My poor friend!" He shook hands with him simply. "You have been deluded too. You have sought romance among incorrigible rebels, among poets and artists, no doubt. And, above all, you have sought it in the person of Count Kettle's daughter. You have probably a typist in your office. You should have married her. It is obvious. Certainly she will have the heart of a rebel. From her window in the suburbs she is this minute envying a gypsy, envying her romantic lot."

He lowered his head. He raised it. His brilliant eyes were as steady as ever they had been. The recovery was wonderful. There was something in his expression that was rare—as if he had passed triumphantly through fire. A peace had descended on him. The traces of his ordeal were obliterated. A

slackness of his lips was the only trace—as if he were tired.

He smiled peculiarly.

“*E pur si muove*,” he said musically. “Derided by the world, betrayed by its originators,” the force which drives me still compels my obedience. I seek the incarnation of my ideals ; and, one by one, the false messiahs betray me. Yet nothing will cure me of my optimism but a personal trial, and a disappointment, in each of those many causes which profess to embody my ideals.”

He hesitated. He concluded with slow significance :

“Happily life is too short for that ; so my optimism is bound to endure as long as my body endures.”

With a friendly—and natural—smile, he then left the room. Margaret, whose misery was now abject, scarcely knew what was happening. Her knowledge was complete only when the closing of the hall-door made it of no avail. A movement of her husband’s diverted her mind to the problem that her marriage presented. Concerning this problem, she was sure of one thing only. She could not endure a life in

common with a man so tragically incompatible with herself. Such a life, she felt, would be a series of reproaches . . .

Fixing his eyes on the wall, her husband began :

“ I’ve been thinking, and we can’t go on like this. I’ve shocked you abominably, beyond reparation, I’m afraid. You have done the same to me.”

“ What can we do ? ”

“ Nothing by halves. That is useless.” He presently added: “ I don’t see what there is to do—but separate.”

She was secretly astounded. A man or a woman is always astounded on finding that a conclusion (believed unique) has been reached by another and accepted as a matter of course. She would certainly have suggested a plan similar to his. She did not say so.

“ Very well,” she replied. “ You are tired. You want to get rid of me. I understand, I assure you.” Realizing her childishness, she corrected it: “ Ah ! You are quite right. There is nothing to do . . . but separate.”

A sob was troubling her. She choked with the effort of conquering it. Her eyes were

smarting, so she turned her head. This was the end of her marriage. Well! Perhaps she deserved such an end. For she remembered and saw in a new light the apprehensions that had tormented her as her marriage-day drew nearer. She thought: "Men seduce us with kisses. Priests hypnotize us with words. Between them, they distract our attention, till it is too late . . . too late . . ." She hurried to the door. She preferred to cry in private.

It was six o'clock. The deep bell of the neighbouring church began the *Angelus* before she could reach the door. Habit prevailed as the three rapid notes penetrated her consciousness. She fell on her knees and made the sign of the Cross. Her husband also knelt. God must estimate the part played by rivalry in the hearts of those ridiculous young people. They turned, as they knelt, and found that they were facing one another.

They were speechless. They looked into one another's eyes, each seeing a fresh aspect in the other. Macaig then scrambled to his feet, took an undignified stride, secured her with his arms—for ever. She was passive

as he raised her. We might reasonably expect an historic remark, a mighty phrase illuminating her soul—and the situation. There is no mistaking what she stammered:

“I ordered dinner for two.”





## EPILOGUE

I HAVE told Margaret Kettle's love story. I pieced it together in the summer following its discovery, a discovery made fortuitously in an obscure little Dublin hotel. *Pieced* is the right word. It came to me in fragments, from Count Kettle who is back with his dreams in Ireland. From the Macaigs whose acquaintance I have made. From the Carmelite friars whom I visited last month. From many insignificant people. The climax (which I have just set down) I had from Father Clithero, that sensible Jesuit who instructed Macaig in his religion. I remembered, as he finished, the English journalist whom I had once met in Dublin. Of Margaret Kettle, the journalist had said: "Give her a six-roomed villa in a London suburb." He had been snubbed for his lack of perspicacity. I now perceived that he had seen further than any of us. It was perhaps easy for him to see. He was not prejudiced by a preconceived false ideal.

Father Clithero told me what he knew in his room in Hill Street. The muted roar of the Sauchiehall Street traffic thither penetrated as it must once have penetrated to Margaret Kettle's bedroom, when she delighted her eyes with the spectacle of her sleeping husband, on the morning of that day that was to bring her so many things. Father Clithero, I remember, was smoking a briar pipe. He puffed at it several times, as if he were satisfied with the way he had ended his story. I, for my part, was not satisfied. It seemed that the reconciliation was artificial, that the pair of inscrutable lovers must for ever be left with a disappointing feeling that each had cheated the other. I lit a cigarette with vexation. I tried to express what I felt.

"But essentially they were both right," I pointed out. "Their marriage could never be successful."

"Why not?" Father Clithero briskly looked at me.

"The difference in their characters."

He shook his head positively.

"Their characters were much the same. Only their temperaments were different."

I turned this over till it dawned on me that it was quite true.

Father Clithero went on :

“ She felt that her religion was the most practical thing upon earth. Very good. When our *Angelus* began to ring, and she saw her husband kneel down, she would see, too, would she not, that he was still sticking to his faith—and so was her father. So she plucked up hope. For she thought that there must, after all, be a practical streak in them somewhere.”

“ And young Macaig ? ”

Father Clithero smiled dazzlingly.

“ Why, he felt his religion a most romantic thing. And as Margaret was still professing it, he was quite sure that she must be romantic at bottom.”

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The Whitefriars Press Ltd., London and Tonbridge.







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